

DR. DODD'S SCHOOL

By



J. L. Ford

From Berne

to

Uncle Bertram

Christmas 1902 -

DR. DODD'S SCHOOL

BY JAMES L. FORD

AUTHOR OF "HYPNOTIC TALES"

CHURCH PERIODICAL CLUB

Grace Church

Lawrence, Mass.



New York

International Association of Newspapers and Authors

1901

COPYRIGHT, 1890,
BY
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY.
[All rights reserved.]

Braunworth, Munn & Barber
Printers and Binders
Brooklyn, N. Y.

DR. DODD'S SCHOOL.

CHAPTER I.

TO THE RESCUE—DIXON LUDLOW'S FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL—THE "JACKOS" AND THEIR INFLUENCE—SOME OF DR. DODD'S BIG BOYS—FUN WITH THE NEW BOY IN THE UPPER HALL—HOW TO PLAY "THE WATERFALL."



THE school eleven, under Captain Jack Adsitt, were playing a practice game of foot-ball with a scrub eleven enrolled for the occasion by Ken Boteler, while a dozen or more of the smaller boys looked on from

the top of the big wood-pile, applauding the good points and discussing the chances of the school in the next big

match. The scrub eleven was doing very well this fine October afternoon, and the game had just reached an interesting stage when little Willy Trafton, the lame boy, was seen hobbling toward the playground, and waving his crutch to attract attention.

"What's the matter?" demanded Jack Adsitt as he called to Boteler to hold the ball for a few moments.

"They've got hold of Ludlow," gasped Willy excitedly, "and they're taking him down to the river to duck him. Come along, quick! There's a dozen of 'em got him."

Adsitt waited to hear no more. "Here, Boteler!" he shouted; "come over here; all of you!" Then, as the boys, flushed and panting from their exertions, crowded about him, he explained:

"Those Jackos have got hold of that little new chap, and they're going down to duck him in the river. That's got to be stopped. Boteler, you take your crowd down by the lane, and we'll go right across lots and try to head them off."

Boteler dashed off down the lane that led from the barn to the river, followed

by the rest of the scrub eleven and the boys who had been watching the game, while Adsitt and the school eleven dashed off across the fields. Boteler had not gone far before he saw the "Jackos," as they were called, dragging their victim along in the direction of the river bend, where the boys were wont to go swimming.

"Now, then, don't make any noise," said Boteler, as he jumped the stone wall and started across the pasture, with the others close behind him. They ran in a compact body, and were literally on the heels of the enemy before they were discovered. In an instant little Dixon Ludlow was wrested from the grasp of his captors, half a dozen of whom were sent sprawling to earth by the force of the collision.

"There now!" exclaimed Boteler, as he hurled one of the ringleaders against a tree; "you want to leave this youngster alone after this, or you'll get into trouble. What have they been doing to you, Ludlow, or whatever your name is?"

"They were going to put me in the river because I wouldn't let them have the

things I brought with me from home," said the boy.

"Yes; and we're going to do just as we please," cried Cropsey, the biggest of the Jackos, coming forward in a threatening manner. "What business is it of yours, anyway? Are you running this school or not? Come ahead, fellers. We ain't going to let these milksops boss *us* around."

He seized Ludlow as he spoke, while his followers gathered close about him, ready to fight at the first provocation. Boteler's eyes flashed angrily, and he struck Cropsey a blow full in the face. The other turned upon him at once, and then the fight began. The Jackos numbered more than a dozen, and were all large boys. They were too much for the foot-ball team, and were getting the best of the fight when Adsitt and his party appeared suddenly and turned the tide of battle. The Jackos disappeared, muttering threats of vengeance, and the rest of the boys returned to the playground, bearing Ludlow with them. He had been set upon, he said, by a number of Jackos, who found him sitting behind the barn with Willy Trafton

eating some of the plum-cake that he had brought from home. He was a new boy, and had just arrived that day. Coming, as he did, a fortnight after the beginning of the term, and being, moreover, the smallest boy in the school, the Jackos had looked upon him as a suitable victim for their brutality.

"I brought some cake and oranges and things from home," said Ludlow to Adsitt, who was walking beside him and questioning him, "and Trafton and I went out behind the barn to eat some, because he told me if those other fellows found us they'd take my things away from me. That big fellow came along—the one that got smacked in the jaw just now—and said I'd got to divide up what I had. I wouldn't do it, and then he said he'd take me down and duck me in the river. Trafton ran off to the playground, and then a lot more fellows came along, and they were dragging me to the bank when you came up. That's all."

"I'll tell you what it is, fellows," broke in Adsitt, "this bullying little fellows is played out. It never was known in the school until these Jackos came here, with

their cowardly notions, and started in to run things to suit themselves. This is my fifth year here, and it's my last, but while I stay here I don't propose to see the school run down by such a pack of curs as that."

"It's a pity big Burns isn't here now," said Boteler; "he could lick the whole crowd of them with one hand tied behind his back. Do you remember how he cleaned out the townies that Saturday afternoon? Those were the times when we had the right sort of fellows here. Why, you new fellows ought to have seen the way we used to do then. Such a thing as a Jacko wasn't known or even thought of then."

"I say, fellows," exclaimed Adsitt suddenly, stopping in the path and turning to face the others, who gathered in front of him, "what's the reason we can't do something ourselves to put the school back where it used to be? Big Burns isn't here any more, to be sure, but I am, and so are Ken Boteler, and Jim Pine, and Pilly Rossiter, and a lot more of the right sort. We're strong enough to keep those Jackos down without asking the Doctor

to help us, and what's more, if we all stand by one another we can do it. These fellows that we licked to-day only came here at the end of last term, and now they seem to think they can run the whole school right over the heads of some of us who've been here three and four and five years. Is that right? I say no; and if we're going to stop it we've got to organize and work together."

"Right you are, Jack!" exclaimed two or three of the larger boys, while the rest echoed his sentiments in various ways.

"Come along," said Boteler eagerly; "let's sit right down here under the old oak-tree and organize an anti-Jacko League, with Jack Adsitt as captain."

The boys grouped themselves on an old ruined stone wall by which the tree stood and listened eagerly to Boteler's words.

"I don't think," he said, "that you need to be told why this meeting is called. We all know what the result has been of having these Jackos in the school. There have been more mean things done, more bullying of little boys, more running to teachers to tell tales since these fellows came here than I ever knew the

whole time I've been in the school. Now we've got to do something to stop it, and I want all who are in favor of it to signify by saying aye."

The response to this was a hearty and unanimous "aye," followed by a profound silence, when the presiding officer called for "contrary-minded."

"That's something like," continued Boteler; "but here comes young Trafton. He ought to be in the League, if he is lame. If it hadn't been for him we wouldn't have got down in time to save this little chap here."

Sure enough, Willy Trafton was seen coming down the lane as fast as he could.

"Well," he exclaimed, as he joined the group under the tree, "they didn't duck you, Dixie, did they? I was afraid the boys wouldn't get there till too late."

"Oh, I'm all right!" said Ludlow with a smile; "but I'm much obliged to you, all the same."

"Trafton," said Boteler, "we're forming a League against those Jackos, and we want to know if you're with us or not."

“ I’m in anything that you and big Adsitt are in,” replied the boy simply.

“ Very well, then. Now I propose Jack Adsitt as president of the League. He’s the head of the school, and the place belongs to him by rights. All in favor say aye.”

The head of the school stood up beside the stone wall, ran his eye quickly around the group, and said : “ Very well ; if I’m to be president I must have a cabinet. Ken, you’d better be secretary of war, because you’re a fighter from way back. I want you to come over to my room after study hour to-night, and you too, Sim Barcalow, and Pilly Rossiter, and Jim Pine, and Sam Quincy. You all come over there, and I’ll have a plan to propose. Meantime, you little fellows remember that mum’s the word.”

Then the sound of the bell was heard, and the boys hurried back to their rooms to prepare for supper.

At the time of which I write Dr. Dodd’s school was suffering from the influence of about a score of boys, known to their companions as “ Jackos,” who had joined the school in a body shortly

before the close of the preceding term. These boys had come from a pretentious school called the Jacot Academic and Collegiate Institute, which had, happily for the morals of the rising generation, broken up a short time before. The Jacot Institute was conducted on the French plan, and a more iniquitous system of training could not easily be devised. The boys were constantly subjected to the espionage of the teachers, who were in the habit of creeping quietly along the corridors and peering in at the scholars as they sat in their rooms. A sliding panel in the door facilitated the work of the spies. Moreover, the boys were encouraged to tell tales on one another, and it is not surprising that by this system a race of sneaks was developed and maintained. The teachers were always on the alert to catch their pupils in some fault, and would deliberately place temptation in their way, hoping that they would yield to it.

Each boy knew that he was regarded as a liar by those in authority over him, so it was a very easy matter for him to become one. And as he saw that sneaking and tale-bearing secured the favor of

the principal, and consequently a large number of good marks at the end of the term, he was, unless he happened to be a boy of remarkably strong character, quite ready to adapt his conscience to the exigencies of the moment.

Now, Dr. Dodd had always aimed to make his pupils not only learned but manly, honest, and truthful. He had never permitted either espionage or tale-bearing, and his boys had always been known as a vigorous, fun-loving, jolly lot, a little wild, perhaps, but never mean or malicious. A great many graduates of the school had won for themselves enviable positions in the world, and it was a fact often commented on that these "old boys" delighted to keep up their friendship with the Doctor and his school, and to go back, from time to time, to visit the familiar scenes of their boyhood days.

It may have been that the natural beauty of the country in which the school was situated, as well as the healthy, free life that they enjoyed, had something to do with this feeling which drew them back from time to time, for the village of Maplefield stood in the midst of a mountain-

ous region celebrated for its picturesque views, its hills covered with dense woods, its broad, fertile valleys, through which a river pursued its slow, winding course, and especially for its pure, bracing air, which contributed in no small degree to the rugged health and vigor which the boys acquired through the outdoor life and athletic sports, which at all times received the Doctor's heartiest encouragement.

Dr. Dodd had been principal of the school for twenty years, and was no believer in the pernicious foreign system of espionage, which had been in vogue at the Jacot Institute. Out of school hours he allowed his pupils the utmost freedom of action. They could roam over the mountains, skate on the river, take long walks through the country, or play on the school playground. Foot-ball, base-ball, coasting, shinny, and other sports dear to the boyish heart were freely indulged in, and he disliked nothing more than to find boys sitting around the fire during the hours devoted to recreation.

School began at nine, with a preliminary hour of study at eight in the morning, and lasted until two, when dinner

was served, and then the boys could enjoy themselves as they pleased until six, when the supper bell rang. At seven o'clock study hour began, and lasted until nine, when the boys repaired to their rooms, and were supposed to remain there until the following morning. The lights were extinguished at ten o'clock, and then one of the teachers made the rounds, to see that all the scholars were in bed.

At the time of which I write Dr. Dodd's school had been established about twenty years, during which time it had grown from the half dozen pupils who used to live in the Doctor's family, and recite in his study, to three score of boys of all ages, who filled the three large buildings now made necessary by the growth of the school. These buildings were : the Old House, in which the principal and his family lived, together with about twenty-five of the smaller boys, and in which were the kitchen, dining-room, and parlor ; the Chestnut House, so called because of the wood used in its finishing, which contained about twenty boys and two teachers ; and the School House, whose upper floor lodged two teachers and fifteen boys.

The lower floor of the School House was devoted to recitation-rooms and the big school-room, where the boys' desks were. Nearly all the occupants of this house were Jackos, and a great trouble they were to the teachers in charge.

The Chestnut House was entrusted to the most popular teacher in school, Monsieur Valcour, commonly called "Mus-seer." Monsieur Valcour was a finely educated and vivacious French gentleman of about forty years of age, who had fought with distinction in 1870, and had since his arrival in this country taken out naturalization papers and become an American citizen. He had taught at one time in the Jacot Institute, but had resigned his position because he detested the methods practised there, and saw only too plainly their demoralizing effect on the scholars. Monsieur Valcour easily controlled the boys in the Chestnut House, and took a deep interest not only in their studies, but also in all their sports. Although, like most of his race, he was no ball-player, still he was enthusiastic in his devotion to the school nine, and never failed to attend any match in which it

played. No man could have exerted a better influence, both morally and intellectually, than did M. Valcour, and no man could have been better appreciated both by the principal and his pupils than was this gallant little French teacher.

There was a great deal of whispering and passing of mysterious notes that evening in study, for the little boys were too much excited over the events of the afternoon to give their attention to their books. The moment the bell rang there was a general stampede for the Chestnut House, where Jack Adsitt roomed with Jim Pine. The boys designated as members of the League entered the room, followed by Adsitt, who unceremoniously slammed the door in the faces of the youngsters, and told them to go back to the Old House and keep their heads shut.

“Now, fellows,” said Adsitt, taking a seat on the table, as became the presiding officer of such an august assemblage, “you know what we’ve come here for, and I think we’re all of the same mind in regard to those Jackos, who’ve been doing all they can to demoralize the school.

The more I think of it the more I'm convinced that we've got a pretty big job on our hands, and we've got to all pull together if we expect to do anything. Now I've got a plan to propose—"

This was all that the boys who were listening in the passage-way heard, for at this moment Jim Pine, suspecting their presence, opened the door suddenly, and drove them down-stairs and out of the building. Then they drifted over to the Old House, wondering what Adsitt's plan was, and what would come of the formation of the League.

Willy Trafton limped along beside Dixie Ludlow, for the two were fast friends now, besides being the smallest boys in school.

"They'll probably have some fun with you to-night," said Willy—"they always do with new fellows—but you mustn't mind it. If you don't get mad they'll like you all the better, and then when another new fellow comes you can have lots of fun playing jokes on him."

"Do you think there'll be another new boy this term?" inquired Dixie eagerly; but before the other could reply Gerald

Adsitt, Jack's little brother, turned to them and said :

“Say, fellows, we're all going up into the upper hall to have some fun. The Deacon's up there reading ; so don't make any noise, and we'll blow the light out on him.”

Now, the Deacon, whose real name was Peter Drury, had received his nickname because of his solemn appearance, quaint manners and form of speech, and devotion to all sorts of books except those included in the school course. He was extremely absent-minded, and when absorbed in his book was absolutely oblivious to whatever went on about him.

When the boys reached the upper hall, which was arranged as a sort of sitting-room, and heated by a large soap-stone stove, they found the Deacon seated, with a bright oil lamp on the table beside him, deep in a volume of travel. He looked up suspiciously as the boys entered, but as they apparently paid no attention to him he returned to his book, and was soon roaming with Stanley through the wilds of Africa. The boys entered upon an eager discussion of the

last base-ball match, while Tommy Finn seated himself on the other side of the table, and, without attracting Drury's attention, began to slowly turn down the wick of the lamp by which he was reading. Lower and lower went the light, and closer and closer went the Deacon's nose to the printed page, till suddenly he looked up, and was greeted with a howl of laughter, which could not have been restrained a second longer.

"Thunder and gums!" cried the Deacon—it was his favorite oath—"can't you let a fellow read his book in peace without playing your foolish tricks on him?"

Then he stalked off to his own room, and locked the door, while the boys shouted with delight at a joke which they indulged in, at Drury's expense, about once a week on an average.

And now Tommy Finn, a bright-faced, active lad, who seemed to be one of the ruling spirits in the hall, exclaimed, "Take that new fellow into my room and show him the waterfall! Here, you new fellow, come along with me, and I'll show it to you myself, because I know how to make it work."

He led the unsuspecting Ludlow to the door, and ushered him politely in; but just as he stepped across the threshold a pan of water, which had been placed on top of the door, fell on his head and drenched him completely. Again the boys shouted with laughter, and Dixie, remembering Trafton's caution, joined in, too, with as good grace as he could, while Finn officiously wiped the water from his coat, and deplored the carelessness of the fellow who "left that pan of water up there, when he might have known it would fall on somebody."

But even Tommy joined in the laughter when Dixie innocently asked: "Well, where's that waterfall you were going to show me?"

"We'll get you up another one a little later if this one isn't enough," cried Finn; and then Dixie "tumbled," as the boys put it.

But the noise had by this time reached the ears of the Doctor in his study downstairs, and the familiar sound of his footstep on the staircase restored instant quiet.

"What's all this noise about?" he asked

as he appeared in the hall. "Ludlow, how did you get so wet?"

"We were playing a game, sir," replied Dixie, "and the water fell on me. That's all. It wasn't thrown on me."

"What game were you playing?" asked the Doctor.

"The boys called it 'The Waterfall,' but I never played it before," replied Dixie seriously.

"Well," said the Doctor, as he departed, "don't let me hear any more noise here, and," he added significantly, "don't teach Ludlow any more new games."

No more tricks were played on Dixie that night. Every boy in the hall liked him for not complaining to the Doctor when he had such an excellent chance. He had risen, too, in the estimation of the Doctor, who knew perfectly well what had happened, and was glad to see his new pupil ready to stand the jokes and rough play of his fellows without feeling it necessary to "tell" on them.

Tommy Finn did not say anything, but he prepared two glasses of lemonade, and gave Dixie one; and then the bell rang, and the boys all trooped off to bed, Lud-

low sharing a room with Willy Traf-ton.

For some time Dixie Ludlow lay awake thinking over the exciting events of the day, and wondering what his father and mother and little sister would say when they received his first letter with a full account of all his adventures. Little did he dream of all that would grow out of the attack by the Jackos and his rescue at the hands of Adsitt, and Boteler, and Jim Pine, and the rest of the big boys.

“It must be a grand thing to be the biggest boy in school,” he murmured to himself, and then his eyes closed and he fell asleep. His first day at boarding-school was over.

CHAPTER II.

MONSIEUR VALCOUR'S FRENCH CLASS—THE TRIP TO THE CIDER-MILL—BETRAYED BY A JACKO—BILL FITCH SEES THE DOCTOR—DIXIE'S FIRST OFFENCE—MAKING NEW FRIENDS.



DIXIE was awakened at half past six the next morning by the ringing of a bell. He sat up in bed, rubbed his

eyes, and said to Willy Trafton, who had not moved, "What's that bell for?"

"That's the getting-up bell ; don't bother me," was the reply, as Trafton turned over, and apparently went to sleep again. For several minutes Dixie lay perfectly still, wondering why it was that, if that were

the rising bell, none of the boys left their beds. Then he got up, dressed himself, and went out into the hall. It was ten minutes of seven, so he went back and woke up Willy, who left his bed unwillingly enough and began to dress. By this time a few of the boys in the other rooms could be heard moving, but it was not until the first stroke of the breakfast bell was heard that the last ones arose. Dixie could hear them scrambling into their clothes as he and Trafton went downstairs to the dining-room and took their places behind their chairs. Then the Doctor, from his place at the head of the centre-table, gave the signal, and they all sat down. Just then Tommy Finn, who had been loitering about the entry, walked in and slowly made his way to his seat. As he sat down the door opened, and Jack Douglas, walking still more slowly, followed him across the room. He had not gone many steps before a terrific noise was heard outside, the dining-room door was burst open, and Deacon Drury fell headlong into the room, picked himself up, with a deprecatory glance at the Doctor, and then

dropped quietly into his seat, while all the small boys shook with restrained laughter.

Then the Doctor said grace, and three score of tongues seemed to be suddenly unloosed. Dixie was almost startled by the clatter and noise that followed the principal's reverent "amen."

"What made those three boys come in one after another like that?" he inquired of Trafton.

"Oh, that's an invention of the Deacon's; but I'm afraid the Doctor'll drop to it if they try it many times more. You see, if one of them is late the other two have to walk slowly in, one after the other, so as to give him all the time possible to get down before the blessing's asked. If you're late, you know, you have to go without your breakfast. The Deacon came down so fast he tripped and fell into the room. Like as not Tommy Finn left something on the staircase for him to trip on. He's always playing tricks on some one or other."

After breakfast the Doctor called Ludlow into his study, questioned him regarding the progress he had made in his

studies, and then told him to report to Monsieur Valcour at the close of the morning study for examination in French and Latin.

Accordingly at nine o'clock Dixie joined seven or eight of the larger boys who were on their way over to Monsieur Valcour's room, in the Chestnut House, for their regular morning recitation in French. Among them were Jim Pine, "Pilly" Rossiter, Sim Barcalow, and one or two others, whose participation in the rescue of the previous day he remembered with feelings of lively gratitude.

"Hulloa!" exclaimed Pine, a tall boy with a pleasant, good-natured face; "here's the little chap those Jackos were going to duck in the river yesterday. Well, youngster, did they bother you any more?"

"No," said Ludlow; "you fellows gave 'em all they wanted."

"Well," continued Pine, "if those Jackos lift a hand against any of you little fellows in the Old House, just come right over and tell me or Adsitt or Boteler, and we'll give them something they won't forget in a hurry. Don't let the

Doctor know anything about it, but come right straight to us."

"What will you do to them?" asked Ludlow, remembering the mysterious meeting of the night before.

"Never mind that," said Pine significantly. "We've formed a League against them, and the first time we catch them at their old tricks something unpleasant will happen to them, that's all."

They reached the Chestnut House, and knocked at Monsieur Valcour's door. It was opened by the French teacher himself, who appeared with his throat done up in red flannel, and explained in a scarcely audible whisper that he had been seized with a sudden and severe attack of tonsilitis, and would be unable to attend to his classes that day.

The boys, thus left unexpectedly with an hour on their hands, paused a moment on the doorstep, uncertain what to do.

"What's the use of going back to the school-room again," said Sim Barcalow; "we haven't anything to do for an hour; let's go off somewhere and have some fun."

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Jim

Pine; "they're making cider to-day at the old mill on the back road. We've just got time to go over there, drink some cider, and get back before the hour is up. Come, we'll jump the fence and run across lots. We'll never be caught in the world."

They scaled the fence back of the Chestnut House, and, having satisfied themselves that none of the teachers could see them, ran swiftly across the fields till they reached the back road that led to the old cider-mill.

Ludlow ran along with them, though he hesitated at first, not knowing what course he ought to pursue. But Jim Pine turned to him with his pleasant smile, and said: "Come along too, young fellow; don't you want to get some cider?" So he trotted along beside his tall companions, trying to persuade himself that he was doing right, though he knew perfectly well that if they had not been breaking the rules they would have gone out through the front gate, instead of over the back fence; nor would they have been anxious about escaping the notice of the teachers.

Dixie had come to the school filled with the best resolutions to obey all the rules and study diligently ; and now, as he ran along beside the others, he could not drive out of his mind the thought that in spite of all his promises to his mother, and his strong resolve to do right, here he was yielding to the very first temptation that came in his way. He was a little nervous, too, for fear they would be caught by some of the teachers. What would the Doctor—that awful combination of sternness and wisdom—say if they were dragged before him charged with having left the grounds during school hours?

The other boys, however, seemed to have no anxiety about the matter, and walked rapidly along, talking earnestly together. They reached the mill, absorbed some of the new, sweet cider through straws, and then set out for home again.

Sim Barcalow and Jim Pine called Ludlow over to them and questioned him closely in regard to the assault made on him by the Jackos the day before. Dixie, who did not, of course, know the names of the different boys, described as well as he

could those who had taken active part in the aggression.

"All right," said Barcalow when he had finished; "it must have been Dozen Purdy, and Twenty Durand, and Ten Cropsey who were at the head of it. We big fellows are just waiting for a chance to go for them. They've been a perpetual nuisance ever since they joined the school, and we've formed a League against them. Mind, though, that you don't let them know anything about it."

By this time they had reached the Chestnut House, and, having looked carefully about to see that they were not watched, they all strolled over to the School House as if they had just finished their French recitation.

One boy, however, saw the members of the French class climb over the fence behind the Chestnut House, and sneak off through the fields to the back road. That boy was "Dozen" Purdy, one of the most prominent of the Jackos; and as he was still smarting under the ignominy of the defeat that he and his fellows had suffered the previous afternoon, he determined to report them to the teacher.

Purdy owed his nickname to the fact that in the Jacot Institute, where all the boys had been known by numbers, like so many convicts, his number had been twelve, which was transformed into "Dozen" by his associates. For the same reason Durand was often called "Twenty," Cropsey "Ten," and in short nearly every one of the Jackos still kept the number by which he had been called at the French Institute.

When recess was announced Purdy approached Ludlow with a serious face and said, "You seem to be getting into trouble pretty soon for a boy of your age. The Doctor's going to sweeten you, though, after school is over."

"What for?" demanded Dixie, very much alarmed.

"Oh, you'll find out quick enough without my telling you," retorted Purdy as he moved away, satisfied that he had said enough to make the little fellow miserable for the rest of the day. When Purdy played a trick it was always on a boy much smaller than himself, and it was always a mean and cowardly trick, too. His words had their desired effect ;

for instead of enjoying his recess as the other boys did, Dixie went up to his room, and almost wept as he thought of the terrible punishments that might be meted out to him for his disregard of the rules. He had only been in the school one day, and as yet the Doctor was to him an awful and mysterious being, capable of taking any vengeance that he might see fit. He marvelled as he remembered the easy way in which he had replied to the Doctor's questions in the upper hall, the night before, and he wished now that his conscience was as clear as it was then.

It never occurred to him to consult his room-mate, Trafton ; he was ashamed of himself for caring so much for Purdy's idle words, and was afraid that the other boys would laugh at him if they found out how frightened he was. So his fear of ridicule, combined with a guilty conscience, served to make him miserably unhappy, which was precisely what Purdy had intended when he spoke to him at recess.

Satisfied that he had made Dixie wretched for the rest of the day, Purdy consulted with two or three of his cronies as to

the best means of getting the rest of the French class into trouble for leaving the grounds during school hours.

"It won't do to go to the Doctor direct," said "Fatty" Wines; "I don't want him to pitch into me again the way he did that time I told him about those fellows hooking apples."

This had happened soon after Wines entered the school. Supposing that it was conducted on the same plan as the Jacot Institute, from which he had come, he had taken an early opportunity to ingratiate himself—as he supposed—with the Doctor, by running to him with a story about some of his comrades, whom he had seen returning from a neighboring orchard with their pockets stuffed full of apples. On this occasion the Doctor had expressed his opinion of sneaks and tell-tales in such a forcible manner that Wines had never dared to play the rôle of informer again.

"I'll tell you how we'll manage it," said Purdy; "we'll get one of the townies to complain to the Doctor about the boys crossing his field. There's that drunken loafer, Bill Fitch, who's always ready to

make a quarter any way he can ; he'll do it for us."

Accordingly, that same afternoon, Bill Fitch, the village ne'er-do-well, knocked at Dr. Dodd's door, and asked him if he would be kind enough to forbid his young gentlemen to trespass on his fields any more : " They wuz half a dozen on 'em come threw my pastur lot this mornin', a-lettin' daown the bars, an' forgettin' tew put 'em up," he explained, " an' I'd kinder like tew hev it stopped."

" This morning !" exclaimed the Doctor. " Why, they were all in school this morning. It must have been some other boys that you saw."

No ; Fitch was positive that half a dozen of Dr. Dodd's scholars had passed through his lot that morning between nine and ten o'clock—on their way to the cider-mill, he " reckoned ;" he had seen them go back by the same way half an hour later.

The principal was very much annoyed to learn that half a dozen of his pupils had absented themselves during school hours for the purpose of visiting the cider-mill. He made up his mind that the

Jackos were the guilty ones, for they had given him so much trouble since they joined the school that he was inclined to suspect them of having a hand in any mischief that went on. He knew also their propensity for lying, and he reasoned within himself that if he questioned them they would add to the enormity of the offence by denying it. The Doctor made it a rule never to deliberately tempt a boy to lie. He was a little perplexed as to what course it would be best for him to pursue, and concluded, after much reflection, to do nothing until the next day.

It happened that no opportunity was offered for two or three days, and in the mean time Ludlow regained his customary good spirits, and concluded that he had allowed himself to be unnecessarily worried, and that nothing would be heard of the escapade into which he had been drawn by older and thoughtless boys.

In fact, there was so much to occupy his mind during his first days at the school, that it was not difficult to forget the fright which Purdy's sly hint had occasioned him. He had been placed in

the fourth or lowest division of the school, in company with Tommy Finn, Deacon Drury, Jack Douglas, Willy Trafton, and other boys of his own age, with whom he had already scraped an acquaintance. He had generously shared with these new friends the cake, candy, and oranges which he had brought with him from home, and they, in their turn, had taken him down to the river and into the woods on the mountain-side, and had even planned an excursion to a lake four miles distant, to take place "the first Saturday Tommy Finn isn't put on bounds," as Drury expressed it.

He was delighted with his new associates, and declared in his first letter home that he had never known such nice boys in all his life. To begin with, there was Tommy Finn, bright, clever, and companionable, but so full of fun and mischief that he was always getting into trouble, and it was a rare Saturday indeed when Tommy was not kept in the school-room at least two hours, and "on bounds" for the whole day, as a penance for his sins. Jack Douglas, who roomed with Tommy, was just as fond of fun and just as popu-

lar, but had a sober side to his character, and paid more attention to his studies than most of the boys of his age, in consequence of which his list of bad marks was much smaller than that of Tommy.

As for Willy Trafton, how could Dixie help liking him after his services on the day of his arrival, when the Jackos tried to duck him in the river? Willy was a delicate boy, afflicted with hip disease, which prevented him from taking part in many of the rough-and-tumble sports to which his comrades were addicted. He was rather a shy, studious lad, fond of reading during his spare hours, but always ready to take part in any games that his feeble frame permitted him to indulge in. He was very popular with his companions, who treated him with the greatest consideration because of his infirmity. Even the meanest of the Jackos did not dare to tease or bully him.

Then there was Peter Drury, commonly known as "the Deacon," than whom no more delightful or quaint character was ever found in any boarding-school. The Deacon was generally very far behind in

the studies which constituted the regular school course, but in the natural sciences of chemistry, botany, mineralogy, and wood-craft he was far ahead of any one in the school. He had a room by himself in the upper hall, in which he conducted mysterious experiments and perfected his marvellous inventions during the hours which his fellows devoted to base-ball, shinny, foot-ball, and other games. When the Deacon left his den it was to take a long walk into the country or to explore some wild, uninhabited region among the mountains. Dixie looked upon Drury as one of the wisest of human beings, and was positive that when he grew up he would become as celebrated as Newton or Humboldt.

With such companions as these, it is not surprising that the remembrance of the visit to the cider-mill soon ceased to trouble him. But on Friday evening he was rudely awakened from his dream of security by the appearance of the Doctor in the school-room at the close of study-hours.

"I have been told," said the principal, speaking in the stern accents which two

decades of school teaching had made it easy for him to assume when necessary, "that half a dozen of the pupils of this school absented themselves from their studies one morning this week for the purpose of visiting the cider-mill on the back road. They went across the fields and through Mr. Fitch's pasture, letting down the bars and neglecting to put them up again. Mr. Fitch has made a complaint to me, and I have determined to find out who the boys were who disobeyed the rules in such a flagrant manner, and put them on bounds as a punishment. I wish the boys who took part in this expedition to report to me in my study on Monday evening, so as to save the rest of the school from remaining under an unjust suspicion. I name Monday instead of to-night, in order that you may have time to decide what to do. Remember, I wish *all* the boys who visited the cider-mill to report to me."

CHAPTER III.

BIG BURNS'S OLD HUT A SCHOOL MYSTERY—A SATURDAY
ON THE MOUNTAIN—THE STAR WIGWAM AT THE
FOOT OF DEVIL'S RIDGE—AN IMPORTANT MEETING
OF SIX.



DR. DODD allowed his boys to roam at will through the surrounding country during the hours allotted to recreation. The village of Maplefield was surrounded by high, densely wooded mountains, and in

the fall of the year the boys were in the habit of building huts in these forests and picnicking in them on Saturdays and holidays. It was the object of each one to keep the location of his hut a secret from his fellows, and as the mountains abounded in rocky glens, almost impenetrable

thickets, and steep precipices, a number of the huts were never discovered.

Jack Adsitt had a hut which he had inherited from Big Burns, the former cock of the school, and although numerous attempts had been made by the other boys to find it, no one in the school but Adsitt had ever seen its interior. Many stories were rife in regard to "Burns's Hut," as it was still called, some of the boys asserting that it was on an island in the middle of Big Swamp, others maintaining that it was not a hut at all, but a covered boat moored in one of the little creeks that ran up from the river, while there were others who firmly insisted that it was in the cleft of a big rock that lay somewhere back of the Devil's Ridge. Smithers, a fat, lazy boy, who was always munching candy by the stove, and sneering at whatever the others took an interest in, said there wasn't any hut at all, and no one but a born fool would believe all those cock-and-bull stories about it.

But there was a hut on the mountains which had been bequeathed to Adsitt by the former cock of the school, and after the meeting in the Chestnut House, in

which half a dozen of the big boys had decided on a plan of action in regard to the Jackos, Adsitt wrote the following letter to Big Burns :

“ DEAR BURNS : It is some time since I heard from you, but I hope you have not forgotten the old school and the good times we used to have here. Since you left there have been some changes which you would not like, and which have not helped the school any. The Jackos, of whom I have already written to you, have been making so much trouble that we have *got* to suppress them ; and this brings me to the subject of my letter. Do you remember the day you took me up to your wigwam, and turned it over to me? You told me to keep it a secret until I left the school, and then turn it over to whoever I thought would succeed me as cock of the school. Well, nobody has ever been able to find that hut yet, though they've tried to a hundred times. Now, I want to let a few of the biggest and best fellows in school into the secret, but I would not do it without getting your consent.

“The fact is, we have organized a League to keep the Jackos in order, and prevent them from bullying the small boys, and I want to use the old wigwam as a place to meet in and discuss our plans. We may lock up a Jacko in it some night, if necessary.

“Have you any objection to this scheme? If you have, I will give it up ; but remember it is for the good of the old school, and that ought to count for something with both of us.

“Answer me right away.

“Your sincere friend,

“J. H. ADSITT.”

And to this he had received the following reply two days later :

“DEAR JACK : Certainly ; go ahead and do as you think best. The wigwam could not possibly be put to a better use. Only keep the secret among yourselves. Don't let it become common property. Write me the result of your scheme, for I am always interested in anything pertaining to Dr. Dodd's school.

“Truly your friend,

“CHARLES J. BURNS.”

This letter reached Adsitt on Friday afternoon, and within an hour he had notified the five boys whom he had previously designated as members of the League to meet him the next morning at a place well known to them all, at the base of a tall cliff, called the Devil's Ridge. He specially cautioned them against leaving the school grounds together, and advised them to start separately, so as not to attract attention.

Accordingly, the next morning, which was Saturday, and consequently a holiday, saw the six boys assembling beneath the tall pines at the foot of the Devil's Ridge. It was a wild, desolate spot, in the very midst of the mountains, and about three miles from the school. The Ridge itself was a notable feature in the landscape, but no one save a few adventurous school-boys ever dreamed of visiting the foot of the towering cliff, to which the earliest settlers of the region had given the name of the Devil's Ridge.

The boys had brought provisions with them—eggs, crackers, coffee to boil, two or three cans of soup, and other things

which taste good after a morning in the keen mountain air on an October Saturday.

"Are we all here?" said Adsitt, scanning the expectant faces before him.

They were.

"Then," continued the head of the school, "I'm going to tell you something and show you something that I think will interest you. I'm going to take you to Charley Burns's wigwam, that you've probably all of you heard of, and which, as you know, he bequeathed to me when he left the school."

These words created a genuine sensation among the five boys who had been summoned to the mountains, and who had wondered why Adsitt chose such a desolate spot as a place of meeting. They had all heard of Big Burns's wigwam, which belonged to the legendary history of the school, and now the mystery which had enshrouded it was to be dispelled, and the wigwam was to be revealed to them, and to them alone. They were amazed and delighted, and they expressed their feelings after the vigorous and slangy fashion of boys of their years.

“Of course,” said Adsitt, “you understand that you’re to keep this secret to the grave, and never even let on that you’ve seen the place at all. I had to write and get Big Burns’s permission to bring you here; and he never would have consented to it if it hadn’t been for what I told him about our scheme to put down the Jacko element. Now, come along, and I’ll show you where it is.”

He led the way over heaps of broken rocks until he reached the dry bed of a small stream. This he followed, the others close behind him, for a short distance, until they found themselves stopped by a huge boulder which had fallen directly across the old watercourse. Directly in front of them the tall, gray cliff called the Devil’s Ridge reared its head.

“Here we are,” cried Adsitt, clambering swiftly up and then down on the other side. The boys followed him with eager haste, and found themselves in a hollow, between the boulder and the precipice, with a thick growth of underbrush on both sides. Adsitt parted the bushes to his left, and revealed an open-

ing, about six feet in height, among the rocks, which were piled up in picturesque confusion.

“Come along,” he said, and, with their guide at their head, they pressed forward through the opening, and the mystery of Big Burns’s wigwam was revealed to their wondering gaze.

It is seldom, indeed, that anything to which we have long looked forward with eager anticipation proves to be as large or as beautiful or as enjoyable as we had hoped it would be. Big Burns’s wigwam, however, was a notable exception to this rule. The boys had heard so much about the hut, so many and conflicting tales had been current in regard to it, that they were all prepared to be disappointed. But when they found themselves inside it, they were almost speechless with wonder and delight.

Burns’s wigwam was built in a cave which he had discovered during his rambles among the wildest part of the mountains. The cave was about fifteen feet in height and twenty feet deep. From the roof hung numerous stalactites, formed by the water trickling through

the limestone rocks above. It was evident that its former owner had spent considerable time and no small amount of money in improving and beautifying his discovery. It was floored with bits of board, which he had carried up laboriously and fastened together with much ingenuity. Two or three apertures in the sides had been enlarged and fitted with old frames of glass, to serve as windows ; and at one end of the cave was a big fireplace, which Burns had built himself from stones and mortar. There was a table in the centre of the room, half a dozen chairs, and various cooking utensils. There were a few pictures on the walls, and the cave was further ornamented with stuffed birds, rabbit and squirrel skins, and other trophies of the forest, for Big Burns had been a famous woodsman in his day.

“ Well, this does beat all ! ” gasped Barcalow, looking from the glazed windows to the fireplace, and from the fireplace to the skins and birds on the walls.

“ If a fellow wanted to run away from school, he could come up here and spend a week, and the Doctor would never find him in the world,” said Jim Pine.

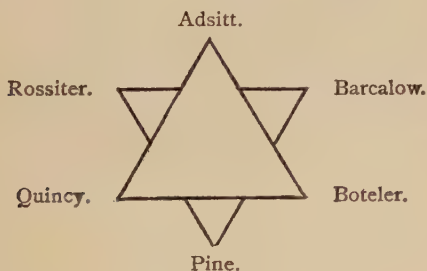
“ I say, fellows, let's do it some time !” cried Pilly Rossiter. “ What fun it would be, and what an excitement it would make when they began to hunt for us !”

But Jack Adsitt nipped that scheme in the bud by saying peremptorily : “ Just stop where you are, Pilly, and remember that you fellows don't own this hut any more than you did before I showed it to you. It's only to be used for the meetings of the League, and nobody is to visit it alone or for any purpose except to carry out the plan for which the League was organized. Now for business ; but first of all let's light a fire and be as comfortable as we can. Just take that hatchet, Sim, and go out with Pine for some wood. There's plenty of it around. I'll get everything ready inside here.”

In a quarter of an hour the provisions which they had brought with them were neatly stowed away on the wooden shelves in the corner, the kettle was filled with water from a neighboring spring, and a bright fire was blazing in the stone fireplace and making the wigwam cheerful and habitable with its warm glow ; for in

spite of all Burns's improvements, the cave was undeniably a damp place.

"Now," said Adsitt, "draw up about the table and listen to me for a few minutes. I propose that we organize under the name of the Star Wigwam, and that we prepare a paper, to be signed by all of us, stating the reasons for the formation of this League and its objects. The badge of the League should be a star like this," and he drew on the table a star with chalk, each point representing one of the six members of the League.



"This star," he continued, "is to hold together until we have succeeded in putting down or wiping out the dangerous element which has lately crept into the school, and has done more harm in the last four months than can be repaired in

as many years. Now, we can keep those Jackos in control a great deal better than the Doctor can, because those little chaps can complain to us when they're bullied and tormented, but they can't go whining to the Doctor. It won't do for us to bring up a generation of sneaks and tell-tales. They're just as bad as Jackos. No; we can let these little chaps understand that the first time any of these fellows with numbers on them, like convicts, punch them or annoy them in any way, they can report them to us. Then we'll discipline them in a way they won't forget in a hurry. That's better than running to the Doctor and complaining."

"Yes," interrupted Boteler at this juncture; "but suppose the Jackos complain to the Doctor about us, as they certainly will complain the first time we lay our hands on them? The Doctor doesn't like tell-tales, as we all know, but he's bound to *do* something if a complaint of that sort is made to him."

"That's a poser," said Sim Barcalow, drumming on the table with his knuckles and looking into the faces of his companions, as if he expected to read there some

solution of the problem that vexed them. There was silence round the table for a moment or two, and then Jack Adsitt said :

“In that case, the very best thing we can do is to go to the Doctor and tell him everything. He must know as well as we do how much harm the Jackos are doing, and if we can show him that we, the biggest and oldest fellows in the school, have found it necessary to take matters into our own hands in order to save the little chaps from being pounded and tormented, why, my opinion is that he'll say we're all right, and tell us to go ahead.”

“That may do for the first time,” said Ken Boteler; “but we're going to have a tough job and a long job on our hands. We'll have not one fight, but twenty, or maybe a hundred, before we make these fellows knuckle under, and every time there's a fight there'll be complaints made to the Doctor. He may come to the conclusion that the Star League is doing more harm than good, and tell us that we'd better mind our own affairs and let him run the school himself.”

“But suppose he sees that we are doing a lot of good,” said Jim Pine. “If we do nothing more than stop bullying, it will be a good deal. We’ve got to prove that the League was not formed for our amusement, but to benefit the school, and then he’ll stick by us as sure as fate. Show him that we’re acting on the square, and we’ll have him with us.”

“There, Jim Pine, you’ve struck the nail right on the head,” cried Adsitt, with a look of relief. “I came to the same conclusion myself last night while I was thinking this thing over in my room. We’ve got to be able to show—if the occasion requires it—that the Star Wigwam is doing real missionary work in the school. Now, I don’t think we can expect to improve the morals of the Jackos for some time to come, but at least we can keep the fellows who are on our side from making as much mischief as they have lately.”

“Well,” broke in Barcalow, “if we can keep those youngsters in the upper hall of the Old House in anything like order, we’ll do what the Doctor and all the teachers put together have never been

able to do yet. There's that Tommy Finn, who's in trouble of some sort every day in his life; and as for the Deacon, as they call him—well, if he doesn't blow the house up some day we'll be lucky. That little brother of yours, Jack, told me the other day that he thought the Deacon was the smartest boy in the world, 'because,' he said, 'he's inventing a new kind of gunpowder that's strong enough to blow up a mountain, if you use enough of it. It only took about five grains to singe all the Deacon's eyebrows and eyelashes off.' Well, all I've got to say is that we'll find the Jackos an easy lot to manage compared with those youngsters in the upper hall."

"I don't think it *is* an easy job," said Jack Adsitt seriously; "but, then, we did not expect a picnic when we decided to organize this League. I'm not much of a preacher, as you know, and I don't claim to be better than any one else, but I lay awake two hours last night thinking this thing over, and came to the conclusion that we'd have to begin this reform movement among ourselves first, then do what we can with those noisy youngsters in

the upper hall, and then we'd all of us be better prepared to tackle the Jackos."

"Well, Jack," remarked Jim Pine, laughing, "this is the first time I ever heard you preach in all the years I've known you. What's got into you?"

"I think I've got a right to preach a little, then, if you never heard me before," rejoined Adsitt good-humoredly, but with the resolute air of one who has made up his mind to say something, and is going to say it, and stick to it, no matter at what cost. "I've been in this school five years, and this is my last year. I'm fond of the school, and I tell you I can't see it running down without lifting a hand to prevent it. What you said, Boteler, the other day set me thinking. You said if Big Burns were here there wouldn't be any of this bullying. Well, why should there be while *we're* here to prevent it? I believe I'm the legitimate successor to Charley Burns—at least, most of them say so—"

"That's so!" "So you are!" cried the others, who were listening with rapt attention now and no small astonishment, for Jack Adsitt was not given to "preaching."

"I'm afraid," continued the head of the school, "that I haven't quite lived up to the record Burns left behind; that a good many things have happened that wouldn't have happened if he'd been here or if I'd taken more pains to fill his shoes something in the way they ought to be filled. This is my last year, but I'm going to make it my best one, and I'm going to begin with myself before I try to pick the mote out of the Jackos' eyes. That lets me out for the present. Now let's adjourn for lunch, and we'll have some more talk afterward."

While Jack was talking Kenwood Boteler had lit a cigarette, and was enjoying that forbidden luxury as he listened.

As the head of the school ceased speaking, Boteler leaned over and grasped him by the hand, exclaiming: "You're right, Jack; that's the only way to do it. I'm with you from the word go, and I'll begin now."

He walked over to the fireplace and threw his half-finished cigarette and the rest of a fresh package of them into the glowing embers.

"A good beginning," said Adsitt. "Now for something to eat."

The meal that followed was a hearty and a jolly one. Adsitt made hot coffee in a tin pot that he took from one of the shelves, and showed them how to cook eggs in the hot ashes and toast bacon on the end of a stick.

As soon as the table was cleared away and the few dishes washed and put back on the shelves, the boys resumed their chairs, and Jack Adsitt went on :

“Now, there’s that matter of the cider-mill the Doctor spoke about. Wouldn’t it be a good scheme for you fellows who were in it to report on Monday night and end the whole matter?”

“Yes, and end the whole matter by being on bounds for the next month,” broke in Pilly Rossiter. “No ; I’m in favor of a grand reformation, if you fellows are, but I think it’s quite enough of a dose to have it begin now. If we begin raking up everything we’ve done this term, we’ll all have to go into solitary confinement, and the Jackos will run the whole school to suit themselves.”

There was a loud laugh at Pilly’s words, and as it was evident that the other boys agreed with him Adsitt dropped the sub-

ject, but determined to renew it before Monday night. After a long discussion, they resolved to see all the boys on whom they could depend, and tell them that the Star Wigwam was prepared to protect them, if they in return would pay more attention to the school rules, and so gain the Doctor's sympathy and good-will.

It was nearly five o'clock when they banked the remains of the fire and started for home. The sun was low in the west and the air crisp and cool as they trudged rapidly down the mountain-side. There was no time before supper to see the smaller boys; but as it was Saturday there would be no study hour that evening, and they could accomplish their purpose after the usual Saturday singing lesson was over.

Just before six o'clock, as Jim Pine was on his way to supper from his room in the Chestnut House, he stumbled over a small boy who was seated on the doorstep in an attitude of extreme dejection.

"Hulloa!" he said. "What are you doing here?"

"Nothing," replied the boy mournfully, raising his head and revealing the usually

bright and laughing face of Dixie Ludlow.

"What's the matter?" demanded Pine. "Have those Jackos been bullying you again?"

"N-no, not exactly," answered Dixie.

"Come now," said Pine kindly, "you can tell me all about it; it isn't like telling the Doctor, you know, for I'm a school-boy, too, though I'm a little bigger and older than you. What have those fellows been doing to you?"

"Well," said Ludlow slowly, "that boy they call Dozen told me the Doctor was going to expel me for going down to the cider-mill the other day, and I didn't want to be sent home before I'd been here a week. Say, do you think he's really going to expel me?"

"Is that all that's troubling you?" exclaimed Pine. "Well, if you let little things like that worry you, young fellow, you'll never enjoy life at all here. The boys will never stop plaguing you. The Doctor'll never expel you in the world. And, besides, he doesn't know who the boys were that went off the other morning."

"But Dozen told me he did."

"Dozen told you!" exclaimed Pine contemptuously. "Why, he's the biggest liar in the school. If you believe everything those Jackos tell you, you'll get your head filled with a lot of lies. But come along with me. I've got something to tell you."

"I suppose we'll all report to the Doctor Monday night," said Dixie as he trotted along beside the big boy.

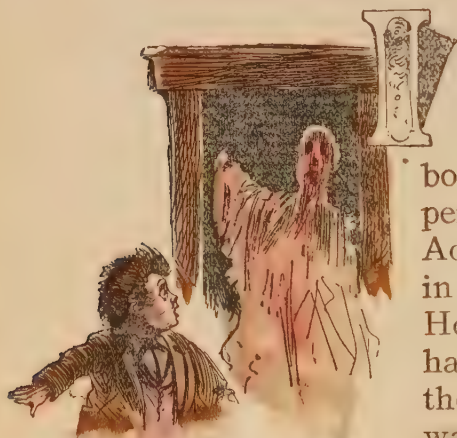
"Report nothing," said the other. "You keep your head shut and do as I tell you. Then you'll be all right. You room in the upper hall, don't you?"

"Yes ; with Willy Trafton."

"Very well. You tell all those little fellows from your hall who were down in the fields with us that day we licked the Jackos—you tell them I'm coming up in the hall as soon as the singing is over to talk to them about something of great importance. Now, not a word of this to any one else, mind you."

CHAPTER IV.

JIM PINE VISITS THE UPPER HALL—TOMMY FINN'S DEFIANCE—THE DEACON'S BRILLIANT INVENTION—SPIRIT RAPPINGS IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM—AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. DODD—STAR WIGWAM DISCIPLINE.



IT had been agreed that Pine should speak to the boys in the upper hall and Adsitt to those in the Chestnut House, and at half-past nine the Star Wigwam should assemble in Adsitt's room to compare notes. Accordingly, the moment the singing lesson was over Pine made his way to the upper hall, where he found half a score of the noisiest youngsters in

the school awaiting him. These he addressed in the following terms :

“ Now, I want all you little chaps to listen to me. We’ve formed a League to protect you from these numbered convicts and to bring the school back to what it was two years ago. Now, what we’re doing is entirely for your own benefit, and you’ve all got to do exactly as we say, or you’re liable to get skinned alive.”

“ It seems to be a philanthropic scheme,” said Tommy Finn gravely, whereat two or three boys snickered aloud, and Pine continued hastily :

“ You all know the sort of tricks these Jackos are up to. How many times have we big fellows had to step in to prevent their pounding you, and bullying you, and stealing your marbles and baseballs? It’s only the other day we had to go down in a body to get this boy here out of their clutches. They were going to duck him in the river because he wouldn’t give them the cake he’d brought with him from home.”

“ That fellow Cropsey stole my baseball bat the other day, and hasn’t given it back to me yet,” put in Jack Douglas.

“All right,” said Pine; “we’ll see that you get your bat back, and all other complaints will be promptly attended to. But you youngsters have got to quit stirring up mischief all the time, or else we’ll never be able to do anything for you. The first Jacko that gets licked will be sure to tell the Doctor—you all know what a lot of sneaks they are—and then we’ll be hauled up for licking him. If we can show that we’re doing some good in the school, why the Doctor will stand behind us, and the Jackos will have no show at all. But we can’t do that unless you little fellows will keep quiet for a time, and not give the Doctor so much trouble. The other night I saw young Finn and Drury sneaking off bounds, when they knew perfectly well it was forbidden.”

“Did you?” retorted Tommy. “Well, the other morning I saw more than half a dozen of you big fellows sneaking off bounds during school hours to go down to the cider-mill. Maybe you didn’t know *that* was forbidden.”

“What does it concern you where we go?” demanded Pine angrily.

“What does it concern you where *we* go?” cried Tommy defiantly.

“Well, never mind that now,” said Pine, realizing that he had put his foot in it; “all you fellows have got to do is to keep as quiet as you can for a few weeks at least, so as to make it evident that the Jackos are the only ones in the school who are making any trouble. That’s all I’ve got to say, and I want you all to remember it.”

And with these words Pine betook himself to Jack Adsitt’s room in the Chestnut House, where the other members of the wigwam were waiting for him.

“Well, what luck?” was the query that greeted him.

“Oh, I suppose everything will be all right in the course of time!” he answered in vexed tones; “but those infernal little beggars don’t seem to care a cent whether we help them or not.”

“What did they say?” asked Barcalow.

“Well, that young Finn had the nerve to fling that cider-mill expedition in my teeth, and so, of course, after that I couldn’t occupy a very high moral plane in giving advice.”

"I think," said Adsitt seriously, "that that simply proves what I said at the wigwam to-day. You can call it preaching if you like, but it's sound common-sense, all the same. If we're going to reform this school, we must begin at the top and let the good work filter down through the whole mass, till it soaks through the tough hides of the Jackos."

No sooner had Jim Pine departed from the upper hall than an excited discussion broke out.

"Wants us to stop all our fun so that he can lick Purdy and make the Doctor think it's for the good of the school," cried Tommy Finn.

"He doesn't want us to stop all our fun," put in Trafton; "he only wants us to stop breaking the rules and getting into rows all the time."

"What sort of fun do we have unless we break the rules?" demanded Tommy. "Did we have fun that night we had the supper here after the Doctor had gone his rounds? Did we have fun the night we scared that new fellow with the Deacon's phosphorous ghost? You can't name a single big time we ever had in

this hall that we weren't breaking some of the rules. These big fellows want us to spend the time walking up and down the yard, like a lot of girls. A sweet old time we'd have doing that."

Tommy's argument seemed absolutely unanswerable, for the truth was that all their fun was intimately associated with some transgression of the school rules. But Dixie Ludlow made a strong point by saying: "Well, wouldn't you call it fun to see some of those big French boys well licked?"

"Pine's right, Tommy, and so is Ludlow," said Jack Douglas; "and, after all, it's only for a week or two that he wants us to behave ourselves, and it will pay us to keep our mouths tight shut for a month if it will prevent those Jackos from plaguing us."

How the discussion would have resulted it is impossible to say, for just at this moment the Deacon emerged from his den, drew up a chair to the stove, and remarked, as he tilted himself back in it: "Thunder and gums! fellows, it seems to be getting colder and colder every day."

"Yes, Deacon," said Tommy Finn;

“that’s a peculiarity that has often been noticed by scientific men at this period of the year. But haven’t you made any other useful discovery to-day? You’ve been locked up in that den of yours long enough.”

“Well,” drawled the Deacon slowly and mysteriously, “I’ve just perfected an invention that I think is going to make quite a little excitement in the school, and maybe I’ll let a few of you fellows into it.”

This announcement was followed by an eager clamor, in which all the boys joined; for though Drury was the favorite victim of all their practical jokes, there was an element of danger and novelty in his schemes which none of them could resist.

“I’ll tell you what it is,” said the Deacon; “you know there’s a cellar under the School House that nobody ever goes into. Well, we can get in there and bore holes with a gimlet through the floor by our desks; then pass a long string through the hole and carry it off to some other part of the cellar, hang it over a hook screwed into the boards above, and

tie a tin pan or a brick to the end of it."

"And what then?" asked Tommy.

"What then? Why, when you pull the end of the string that sticks through beside your desk it will rattle the stone or tin pan against the floor way off at the other end of the room. What more do you want?"

"That's a big invention," cried Finn; "and the beauty of it is that we can work it without being caught."

"We'll go down and fix them the first thing to-morrow morning, so that we'll have them all ready for Monday," exclaimed Willy Trafton, delighted at the prospect of some fun in which he could take part on an equal footing with his comrades.

"Better wait till after church," suggested Jack Douglas; "we won't be noticed then."

In the enthusiasm excited by the Deacon's wonderful invention Jim Pine's words of advice were entirely forgotten, except by Ludlow, who was worried about the outcome of the cider-mill trip, and had no heart for further mischief just then.

The next day was Sunday. At ten o'clock all the boys assembled in the dining-room, dressed in their best clothes, and answered to their names as the Doctor called the roll. Then they started for church in the village, some going to the Congregational Church, in one direction, and some to the Episcopal Church, at the other end of the town. After church there was an hour before dinner, which the Deacon proposed should be devoted to rigging up what he called his "double-back-action knockers," under the School House.

"Where's Ludlow?" asked Tommy, as the conspirators met at the cellar-door on the south side of the house. Nobody had seen him since church; so after waiting a few moments they went on without him, and by the time the dinner-bell rang half a dozen knockers had been constructed, including one beside Dixie's desk, which Tommy kindly made for him, so that he too might join in the fun.

Meanwhile, Dixie, who had formed good resolutions while at church, had purposely kept away from the others, and gone directly to his room, where he re-

mained quietly reading until dinner-time. As soon as that meal was over he betook himself, with a copy of "Oliver Twist" in his pocket, to the gymnasium, and clambered up to a perch on the higher rounds of one of the ladders, intending to remain there until the bell rang for the regular Sunday afternoon Bible class. He knew his own weakness, and wisely determined to keep out of the way of temptation. So absorbed did he become in his book that he did not hear the bell, and forgot all about the Bible class till it was nearly over. Then he started up, ran over to the School House, and tried to drop into his seat without attracting any attention.

The Doctor paused in his discourse and said: "Where have you been, Ludlow? I thought you understood that we had Bible class every Sunday afternoon."

"I did, sir," answered Dixie, turning very red, "but—but—"

"Well?" said the Doctor interrogatively.

"I was reading a book and didn't hear the bell."

"Well, be more careful another time ;"

and the Doctor resumed his explanation of the lesson.

Mr. Tracy, the teacher of mathematics, occupied the platform at study hour the next morning, and a noisy session it was. Tommy Finn opened the proceedings by producing three sharp knocks on the floor of the hall.

"Come in," said Mr. Tracy, and the conspirators snickered aloud.

Then Finn knocked again, louder than before, and Mr. Tracy went out in the hall to look for the stranger, and returned more mystified than ever. This exploit was followed by spirit rappings in the different recitation-rooms, concluding with a terrific pounding directly under the platform, which caused the teacher of mathematics to leap from his chair, to the inexpressible delight of the mischievous element of the school, which happened to be largely in the majority. But the rapping under his chair gave Mr. Tracy a clew, and the instant study hour was over he descended into the cellar to hunt for the source of the trouble. Meantime, Dixie had been enjoying the noisy fun, happy in the knowledge that he was

not concerned in it. All the time, however, he was blissfully unconscious of the fact that there was a knocker of which the string passed through the floor close to his desk, and that he alone was in danger of detection; for the moment Mr. Tracy started for the cellar the other boys had hastily cut their strings and stopped up the gimlet-holes. The only thing, therefore, that the teacher discovered was a brick tied to a string, which was passed through a hole in the floor close beside one of the pillars that supported the top floor of the building. When Mr. Tracy returned to the school-room he proceeded at once to the desk by the pillar, and easily found the knotted end of the string in the hole in the floor. It was Ludlow's desk, and he had gone with the rest of his class into one of the recitation-rooms. The teacher waited until recess, and then went to the Doctor's study and laid the whole matter before him.

And while he was closeted with Dr. Dodd in the latter's study the members of the Star Wigwam were holding an informal meeting on the playground.

"I tell you it was not the Jackos who

did it," exclaimed Jim Pine; "there isn't one of them that has brains enough for anything more brilliant than putting red pepper on the stove. It's those young rascals from the upper hall, and right on top of what I said to them, too. Didn't you see them all laughing when Mr. Tracy went to the door? It looks to me like one of that Deacon's inventions. It's safe to give him credit for everything that's new and queer."

"You can bet that young Douglas had a hand in it, too," said Boteler; "rather dirty of him, too, just as we were going to get his bat back for him."

"Let's go down into the cellar and see what we can find there," said Jack Adsitt; and off they went to make a thorough search.

After dinner, just as Dixie was marching gayly toward the playground he received a summons to appear before the Doctor in his study; and thither he bent his steps in a state of mingled fear and uncertainty.

"Ludlow," said the principal, looking up from his desk as the boy entered, "I have been told that you took part in the

disturbance in the school-room this morning. What have you to say to that?"

"No, sir," said Dixie; "I had nothing whatever to do with it."

"Did you have a string rigged up under your desk leading to a brick suspended under the hall?"

"No, sir," replied the boy with such apparent honesty that the Doctor was surprised.

"There was one found under your desk by Mr. Tracy this noon," he said sternly, "and I remember that you were late at Bible class yesterday."

"I didn't know it was there—I never put it there—it must have been the other boys," blurted out Dixie, growing very red in the face.

The Doctor looked intently at the boy for at least a minute. He did not want to accuse him of lying, nor did he wish to believe him guilty of such a thing. He seemed to be telling the truth, and, after all, Mr. Tracy *might* have mistaken some other desk for his. At last he said: "I hope you are not speaking an untruth, Ludlow, and I hope you will contrive before long to make some explanation in

regard to that string that was found under your desk. You may go now, but I shall investigate the matter further."

Dixie departed, feeling very uncomfortable. He thought that the principal must have got his information from some Jacko who was angry on account of the fight of which he, Dixie, had been the innocent cause. The fact that there was a knocker leading to his desk never entered his mind, for Finn had forgotten to speak to him about it. He was in a very unpleasant frame of mind when he reached the playground, and looked around for some of his intimates.

"Here you, Ludlow ! we're looking for you," cried a voice near him, and on looking up he saw Jim Pine striding toward him.

"You're wanted in the gymnasium," said Pine briefly, and the two started together for the big building behind the School House. There they found half a dozen of the big boys keeping guard over Finn, the Deacon, Jack Douglas, and two or three more of the youngsters from the upper hall. Pine shut the door behind him as he entered, and then Adsitt said :

“Ludlow, you’re the youngster that we rescued the other day from the Jackos. You heard what Jim Pine said up in your hall the other night about better behavior in the school, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” said Dixie, wondering what it all meant.

“Very well,” continued Adsitt; “you were told that on Saturday night and on Monday morning you and your crowd were at work with your knockers under the floor, making study hour perfectly unbearable for the rest of us who wanted to study. What have you got to say to that?”

“I didn’t make any noise,” protested Dixie.

“Don’t lie to us,” broke in Pine; “there’s a knocker that leads right under your desk. I saw it there at recess.”

At this moment Finn remembered his intended kindness of the day before, and exclaimed: “Ludlow didn’t make any noise. I fixed that knocker for him on Sunday along with the rest, because he was up in his room reading and didn’t come with us. I forgot to tell him about it, and he couldn’t have known anything

about it. We cut our strings off short the minute we saw Tracy go down in the cellar, so his was the only one left. Dixie didn't know anything about it. That's honest true."

"Yes, that's a fact," chimed in the Deacon.

"Well, the prisoner is acquitted," said Adsitt, "but the rest of you are convicted, and are hereby sentenced to suitable punishment. Boteler, bring the molasses, and we'll take them one by one."

Then the Deacon was seized and firmly held by Adsitt and Pine while Boteler dipped his hands in a pail of molasses and rubbed the sticky fluid thoroughly into his hair. The rest of the boys were subjected, each in his turn, to the same discipline, and were then allowed to depart, with a stern warning that their next offence would be punished with still greater severity. Dixie, who had alone escaped, helped them to wash the molasses out of their heads, an operation which lasted till almost five o'clock, and, as Tommy expressed it with much bitterness, "spoiled all their afternoon for them."

"Thunder and gums!" growled the

Deacon, "but I'll pay 'em for this. I'll invent something that'll surprise 'em one of these fine mornings."

"For goodness sake," called Trafton, looking up from the pail at which he was washing his hair, "don't invent anything more this term. You've got us into trouble enough already with your marvellous inventions."

"I'll tell you what, Deacon," cried Gerald Adsitt, who was one of the victims, "just put a spoonful of that patent gunpowder of yours under each of their beds, and they'll be blown into kingdom come without knowing what struck them."

"Well, they ought to be blown up!" exclaimed Finn angrily. "What right have they got to punish us every time we break the rules? That's the Doctor's business, not theirs. They're treating us worse than the Jackos, and I'm not going to stand it for one, even if you fellows choose to. I'll help the Deacon to get even with them any time he wants to, and if he'll make the gunpowder I'll put it under their beds."

From which speech it will be seen that Tommy was an unreconstructed rebel.

The members of the Star Wigwam went directly from the gymnasium to the School House, in the top floor of which the Jackos dwelt. Cropsey, Purdy, and half a dozen more of their friends were sprawling about on trunks and beds eating candy, reading novels, and grumbling because they were not back in New York.

"Cropsey," said Adsitt, "Douglas says you took his bat away from him the other day ; where is it ?"

"What's that to you ?" demanded Cropsey sullenly. "If he wants his bat, why don't he come after it ?"

"He has been after it," exclaimed Pine impetuously, "and you wouldn't give it to him."

"You lie !" said the big Jacko doggedly ; "he never—" but before he could finish his sentence Pine had seized him by the throat, struck him full in the face with his clinched fist, and then hurled him to the floor.

Cropsey rose slowly to his feet, looked stupidly about him for a moment, then threw himself upon the other and bore him to the floor, while the Jackos came streaming in from the other rooms and

fell upon Boteler, Adsitt, and the rest with a fury which would have demolished them if it had not been for the timely arrival of Dr. Dodd, who had heard the noise of the fracas in the school-room below, and came hastily up-stairs to put a stop to it.

“What does all this mean?” he demanded ; and the sound of his stern, indignant voice put an immediate end to the fight.

“What does all this mean?” repeated the Doctor, as Pine and Cropsey rose slowly from the floor and stood before him with dishevelled and dusty garments and bloody faces.

“We were all sitting here quietly reading and talking,” said Cropsey, “when these fellows came in and began to talk about a bat I borrowed the other day. Before I had time to explain about it Pine pitched into me, and then the muss began. They just came in here to kick up a fight, and they’re always doing it.”

“Dr. Dodd,” said Adsitt, stepping forward respectfully, “one of the little fellows in the Old House complained to us that Cropsey had stolen his bat, and

would not give it back to him. We came up here to get the bat, and that's the way the row began."

"I never thought of stealing his bat," exclaimed Cropsey ; "he could have had it in a minute if he'd asked for it ; but I don't propose to have a gang of these fellows, who think they can run the school, coming into my room to pick a quarrel with me."

"That will do," said the Doctor ; and, taking a pencil and note-book from his pocket, he took down the names of those whom he had found in the room.

"I don't know why it is," he said, as he replaced the note-book in his pocket, "but during the past fortnight there have been more insubordination, fighting, and disregard of the rules than I have ever known in the school before. All this must stop, or I shall be compelled to adopt harsher methods than I ever have before. You boys who do not room in this building have no business here and will retire immediately."

"We're in for it now," said Pine, as the members of the Wigwam found themselves on the playground again.

CHAPTER V.

ADSITT ADDRESSES THE UPPER HALL—IN DR. DODD'S STUDY—THE DOCTOR'S OPINION OF THE STAR WIGWAM SCHEME—A WEEK ON BOUNDS.



MEETING of the Star Wigwam will be held in my room at once, and I shall expect a full attendance," said Jack Adsitt, after the boys had discussed the situation for ten minutes under the lea of the big wood-pile.

"Now, fellows," said the chief, as soon as the six were seated behind closed doors about the table in his room, "doesn't all this prove that I was right in what I said up at the wigwam the

other day? If we're going to reform this school, we must begin right here with ourselves. Here we've got in a fight the very first thing, and the Doctor thinks it's as much our fault as it is the Jackos. At any rate, we could see plain enough that he put us all down on the same plane."

"Yes," said Jim Pine ruefully; "and he's got us all down in the same note-book, too, which is more important."

"That's it exactly," continued Adsitt; "and unless we do something now we'll all of us—Jackos and all—stand in his books on just the same low level that we do in the note-book."

"But what can we do?" broke in Pine.

"That's just what I'm coming to in a minute. I've made up my mind already—and it'll be pretty hard to shake me—that I ought to go to the Doctor this afternoon, of course with the approval of the Wigwam, and tell him exactly just what we're trying to do. Show him how the Jackos are ruining the school, and prove to him that our crusade is already doing good."

"A lot of good we've accomplished," cried Pilly Rossiter—"put molasses in

those kids' heads, and started a fight in the Jacko settlement that nearly brought the building down about our ears. The Doctor'll be delighted when he hears of our great reformation. Why, we didn't even get young Douglas's bat back. If we only had that to show it would be something. If the Doctor saw us all marching triumphantly into his study bearing Douglas's base-ball bat he'd give us a medal apiece for our valor."

"Pilly," said Adsitt, "don't let your fund of humor run away with your common-sense. I suppose you remember that invitations are out for the young gentlemen who took part in the cider-mill expedition the other morning to attend a surprise party in the Doctor's study to-night. I suppose you will be numbered among the guests?"

"No ; I shall send my card with 'compliments and regrets' on it," replied Pilly gravely, while a laugh ran round the table.

"That's precisely what I don't want you to do," said Adsitt, dropping his tone of light banter and speaking firmly and seriously. "I want you and all the rest

of you who went off bounds that morning to march into the Doctor's study to-night and acknowledge the corn. If you do that, and those youngsters who made the noise in study hour follow your example—and I think they will after I've talked to them—then I can tell him with a clear conscience that the Star Wigwam amounts to something already. Why, what difference does it make to you, anyway? If you don't do it the Doctor's liable to make a lot of new rules, and it will be unpleasant for us all. If you do what I tell you, he may put you all on bounds for a week—what's that?—but he'll be sure to let up on us in the other matter—the fight this afternoon. Moreover, he'll recognize the fact that this League has been formed to *help* him in the government of the school, and *not* to stir up more mischief than there is here at present. I'll go to the Doctor myself and lay the whole matter before him, and tell him you'll be there in the evening."

"Jack's right," said Boteler, as the chief finished speaking; "it's the cheapest and the quickest way out of the scrape. I'm sure I'm ready enough to do it, and

you fellows had better join in too. That young Ludlow was with us that day, but I guess we won't have any trouble persuading him to come with us. Those little chaps will follow our lead pretty near every time."

"Well, you'd better try your powers of persuasion with him," said Pine dryly. "I tackled that job once, and didn't meet with any extraordinary degree of success; besides, I imagine those youngsters are busy getting the molasses out of their hair just now, and are not in a mood to receive any good advice. But I'm willing to offer myself as a sacrifice in the cider-mill question, if the rest are. What do you say, Pilly?"

"I'm with you," said Rossiter; "but I think Jack had better see Ludlow and the rest of those little fellows. He can do more with them than we can."

"I'll go right away," said Adsitt, rising; "this meeting is adjourned until further notice."

The young insubordinates of the upper hall were found clustered about the stove excitedly discussing the new condition of affairs in Dr. Dodd's school. The

Deacon had barricaded himself in his den, where he was said to be engaged in the preparation of some mysterious engine which should avenge the indignity which he and his comrades had suffered. Whenever Deacon Drury locked himself into his room with his crucibles, drugs, and mechanical contrivances, it was a sure sign that the upper hall would be surprised with some new invention. The very little boys, like Gerald Adsitt, firmly believed that the Deacon practised the black art.

The boys stopped short in their talk, and looked up with surprise when Adsitt walked into the hall and addressed them cheerily.

“ Now, I don't want you young fellows to feel sore because we had to discipline you a little to-day. Every one's catching it all round now, and you have to take your share as well as the rest of us. Jim Pine and Rossiter and all the rest of them who went to the cider-mill the other morning are going to walk up to the captain's office to-night and settle—you've got to go with them too, Ludlow—and beside that, all of us big fellows

have got in an awful row, and will probably be put on bounds for a fortnight—all on account of one of you fellows here.”

“How was that?” demanded Tommy Finn suspiciously.

“We all went over to the School House to get back that bat that Cropsey stole from Jack Douglas here. The Jackos all pitched into us, and we were just having a regular knock-down fight when the Doctor came up and nabbed us all.”

“Any one get licked?” inquired Douglas eagerly.

“Well, if you’d seen the way Jim Pine knocked that Cropsey over on the floor, you wouldn’t have asked that question,” responded Adsitt; and then, seeing that he had awakened their interest, he proceeded to give a graphic description of the fight from the moment of their arrival in the Jacko stronghold to the appearance of the Doctor. “And now,” he said, in conclusion, “I want you little chaps to understand that even if we big fellows do go for you when you make a noise in study hour, we’re willing to fight for you every time those numbered convicts bully you or steal your bats. If any of you

have got any complaints to make now, I'm here to listen to them. But we expect you to meet us half way, or we won't be able to do anything for you at all."

"That's fair enough," said Douglas, "but what do you mean by meeting you half way?"

"I mean just this," responded Adsitt; "here you've gone and got young Ludlow in a scrape by fixing a knocker under his desk without telling him anything about it—"

"I would have told him, only I forgot," broke in Finn; "I wanted him to have some fun as well as the rest of us."

"I have no doubt you were actuated by the best of motives," said Adsitt; "but the fact remains that you've got him into trouble with the Doctor, who not only believes that he put the knocker there himself, but tried to lie out of it. You've no right to stand by and let another boy suffer for what you've done. He's not mean enough to blow on you, and you ought to be square enough to come to the front now and put him all right."

"That's so, Tommy," cried Willy Traf-ton; "don't you remember the first night

Ludlow was here, and we played the waterfall trick on him, and the Doctor came up and asked him what the matter was? He didn't blow on us then, and we ought to do the right thing now. I'll go and square him with the Doctor, if the rest of you will."

"Yes, of course we'll go," cried Tommy, who had his code of school-boy honor, and lived up to it, no matter what it might cost him.

"I'll go too, and so will the Deacon; he never backs out of anything," exclaimed Jack Douglas.

"That's right," said Adsitt approvingly; "as long as you youngsters stick by one another like that there's no chance of the Jackos or any one else getting the best of you. I'm going to see the Doctor now, and I'll tell him that you're coming to see him of your own free will. Is that right?"

"That's all right," was the reply, and Adsitt disappeared down-stairs.

"And now for the tug of war," said Jack Adsitt to himself, as he knocked at the door of the Doctor's study. He had succeeded, as we have seen, in bringing

the other members of the Star Wigwam over to his own point of view in regard to the best method of reforming the school. He had also succeeded in gaining the confidence of the smaller boys to such an extent that half a dozen of the most turbulent of them had promised to go voluntarily to the principal and shoulder the blame for that morning's disturbance in the school-room. To do all this, in addition to disciplining the small boys and having a stand-up fight with the Jackos, had taken a great deal of tact, perseverance, and courage. Now, it only remained for him to bring Dr. Dodd around to his way of thinking, and then half the battle would be won. It was with feelings of positive elation, therefore, that the big boy stood with his hand on the Doctor's door-knob awaiting the summons to enter.

"Come in !" was uttered in gruff tones, and Adsitt entered the study and closed the door behind him.

Dr. Dodd was seated at his desk writing. He looked up as his visitor came in, and, without stopping his work, asked him to be seated. For a few moments

his pen scratched busily on, and then he stopped, wheeled round his chair, and said : " Well, what can I do for you ? "

" I have come," responded Adsitt, " to speak with you about that fight in the upper floor of the School House this afternoon. "

" And what have you to say about that ? " asked the Doctor.

Then Adsitt began at the very beginning, and told the Doctor the whole story of the Jacko troubles, the organization of the Star Wigwam, the disciplining of the smaller boys, and the attempt to recover Douglas's bat.

The Doctor heard him patiently through, and then said : " And so you think, Adsitt, that you and your Star Wigwam, as you call it, can render me some assistance in conducting the school ? "

" I do, sir," replied Jack firmly but respectfully.

" Please explain, sir," said the Doctor shortly.

" We can prevent a great deal of bullying—prevent these fellows from the Jacot school from tormenting boys smaller than themselves. Those little chaps can come

to us for redress, while they can't run to you telling tales every time they get hurt. You know what the school-boy code of honor is, and I know that you have always respected it. In return for this protection, the smaller boys agree to make less disturbance in school hours than they have heretofore and pay a little more attention to the rules. I suppose you heard about that row in study hour this morning? Well, the boys who made the noise have promised me that they will come to you to-night and own up. They offered to do this as soon as they heard that Ludlow, who had absolutely nothing to do with it, was suspected. The boys who went over to the cider-mill last week will also report here to-night, simply because they have been brought to recognize the fact that they must set an example to those who are younger than they are. It did not take us long to find out that we can't have any influence or standing in the school unless we keep ourselves above suspicion. We don't claim to be saints, and we don't propose to interfere with the management of the school, but I do think we can help to raise the moral

tone somewhere near where it was before these Jackos came here."

Jack Adsitt ceased speaking, and then the Doctor, who had listened attentively to his narration, said: "I have never had a boy in this school whose departure I regretted more than I have that of Charles Burns, and there has never been a time in all my experience when the school stood in such great need of a boy of his calibre and fine qualities as it does to-day. I hoped at one time, John, that you would take his place as a leader among your fellows; but somehow you always seemed to lack the ambition and strength of character necessary to make one a real leader. I am inexpressibly glad to see that you have taken upon yourself the duties which properly belong to you as head of the school. As for your Star Wigwam, as you call it, and which seems to me a sort of amateur detective agency and lynching party combined, I cannot say that I regard it with very much favor. I would not care to recognize it officially as the school police department. Moreover, if the Star Wigwam became involved in any serious

disturbance in attempting to right any fancied wrong, I would be compelled to deal very severely with it as an organization. No, John, I have very little faith in the Wigwam, though I shall prize very highly the individual efforts of its members to prevent bullying and raise the tone of the school to a higher plane than it occupies just now."

Adsitt remained silent for a few moments, and then said: "We don't ask any official recognition for the Star Wigwam. I simply told you about it because I wanted you to understand exactly what we were doing. If we violate the rules, we shall expect to be treated exactly the same as anybody else. We organized because we thought we could do more united than by each working singly by himself. In fact, the present condition of things is such that nothing but a determined fight will counteract the bad influence which these Jackos are exerting over the younger boys."

"Well," said the Doctor dubiously, "I don't wish to discourage you, but I am still of the opinion that you will accomplish more by separate, individual effort

than banded together in a secret society. However, you may as well give the thing a fair trial. I have often felt that I made a great mistake in admitting those boys from the Jacot Institute to my school. They have done an incalculable amount of harm, and more than once I have been tempted to get rid of half a dozen of the worst of them; but I have been kept from it by the hope that under new and better influences than those to which they have been accustomed they would change. I find now that not only have they not improved themselves, but they have done a great deal toward demoralizing the younger boys with whom they have been brought in contact. If your experiment fails, they will have to go, for I cannot permit the school which I have built up by twenty years' persistent work to be utterly ruined by a dozen corrupt and lazy boys."

Jack Adsitt left the study with feelings very different from those which had filled his mind half an hour before as he stood on the threshold. He was glad to know that the Doctor understood and appreciated his motives, but was bitterly disappointed at his lack of enthusiasm for

the Star Wigwam, the darling of his heart—the creation of his brain. The sense of elation was gone, too. Instead of feeling that the battle was half won, he realized that he had taken upon himself a very great task—one that seemed to him now almost a hopeless one, so many were the difficulties that lay in his path. But, on the other hand, the Doctor's kind words, the confidence he reposed in him, and, most of all, his reference to Burns, awakened in his breast a degree of pride and ambition such as he had never known before. He felt that now, indeed, he was Big Burns's legitimate successor, and not merely the largest of Dr. Dodd's three score of pupils. He had grown older during that half hour in the study.

True to their several promises, the boys who visited the cider-mill and those who rigged the knockers under the school-room floor marched into the Doctor's study that night, and took their punishment—a week on bounds—without grumbling.

And the next day it was pretty well understood throughout the school that there was a strong arm ready to punish the first Jacko who should attempt any bullying.

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER NEW BOY—PROFESSOR SKEESICS—"STUFFING"
CHRISTMAS—THE DEACON'S STORY OF THE BOY WHO
DIED—PROSPECTS OF MORE FUN WITH THE FRESH
ARRIVAL.



SAY, fellows," said Tommy Finn one cold Saturday afternoon, "it's been pretty dull here for the last two or three weeks. There used to be something going on all the time in this hall, but now we don't seem to have any fun at all."

It had been dull, there was no denying it. Ever since the events described in the last chapter the upper hall had been as dull as dishwater. The small

boys had decided to follow Jack Adsitt's advice, and the result had been a period of tranquillity such as that usually noisy floor had never known before. They had paid more attention to their studies, too, for it lacked only four weeks of the close of the term, and most of them knew the relation which existed between the written examination report sent by the Doctor to their parents and the enjoyment of the Christmas season at home. Yes, it had been dull, and when Tommy spoke of fun half a dozen boys who had been quietly reading beside the big stove laid aside their books to join in the conversation.

"Can't we get up something to-night?" suggested Trafton.

"Yes; but what shall we get up?" said Jack Douglas. "All the old games are played out, and we must do something new if we do anything. Where's the Deacon? What's the reason he can't invent something for us to do on cold afternoons? He's always getting up some sort of gunpowder or rat-trap or something that's of no practical use to any one. Why don't he go to work in that den of his—"

But at this moment Dr. Dodd appeared in the hall, leading a boy of about fourteen years of age.

"Young gentlemen," said the Doctor, "this is a new boy who joins the school to-day and will room in this hall."

With that the principal departed, and the boys gathered eagerly about the new arrival and began to ply him with questions.

"What's your name, new fellow?" asked Douglas.

"Christmas," was the shy response.

"Hooray!" shouted Finn, "Christmas has come, and we'll all get some presents. Say, Christmas, what did you bring with you from home? Anything to eat?"

"Yes; but I'm going to eat it all myself," responded the new arrival in a lisping, girlish voice, that showed him to be a genuine Miss Nancy, and made the other boys' eyes sparkle in anticipation of fun.

"Well, Christmas," said Finn, with the serious manner that he could assume at a moment's notice, "it's my duty to tell you that it's against the rules for new boys to eat all the cake they bring with them from home. It's apt to make them

sick. Of course we won't tell on you, but you must be very careful not to let the Doctor catch you at it, for he's a terrible man when he's once roused. Douglas, you had better tell Professor Skeesics that the new boy has come and is waiting to be examined."

At this hint Douglas ran into the Deacon's room and said: "Deacon, there's a new fellow here in the hall, and he's as green as grass. Come out and do the professor act to him."

Drury leaped eagerly to his feet, for nothing made more fun in the hall than his impersonation of the character of Professor Skeesics, one of the most picturesque and effective rôles in his *repertoire*; for the Deacon, with all his quaintness, possessed powers of mimicry that were unrivalled in the school. And while Drury was "making up" for the part which he was expected to assume for the benefit of every new arrival, Finn and Douglas continued to fill the innocent Christmas with information concerning the school.

"Where do you live when you're home, Christmas?" asked Finn.

"In Bawston," said Christmas, adding, with a touch of conscious pride, "we live on Beacon Hill."

"Boston! Beacon Hill!" exclaimed Tommy; "why, those names have a strangely familiar sound. Why, surely I lived there myself once. Did you ever know a family there named Buttertub?"

"Buttahtub!" exclaimed Christmas contemptuously; "I never knew any such people as that."

"Well," said Tommy sadly, "I'm afraid they're all dead, then. I know my father and two of my sisters died three years ago, but I don't know whether the rest of the family are alive yet or not."

"But don't you go home to see them every vacation?" asked the astonished Christmas.

"Vacation! what's vacation?" asked Tommy, with a look of open-mouthed wonder that almost set the rest of the boys off into fits of laughter.

"Why," said the new boy, "Dr. Dodd told me that I was to have three vacations a year, when I could go home to Boston and see my folks. Isn't that the truth?"

"I remember he told me the same thing when I first came here, and I believed him, too," replied Tommy mournfully; "but I haven't set foot outside this village since I was brought here by my poor father six years ago. Why, we none of us go home. There's Jack Douglas, that boy over there, he's forgotten how his parents look, it's so long since he's seen them. Isn't that so, Jack?"

"I can just barely remember them," replied Douglas promptly; "but Trafton wouldn't know his own father if he were to see him to-morrow."

The new boy's eyes opened wide with horror as he listened to these grewsome tales. Finn wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket, and began a harrowing description of what had happened to a new boy the year before, when suddenly the door of Peter Drury's room opened, and Professor Skeesics came forth leaning on a cane. The Professor wore an old dressing-gown belted around his waist, long gray whiskers, a gray wig, and silver-bound spectacles, and spoke in a deep bass voice. In the fading light of the winter afternoon he was the image of a

dried-up, bent-over teacher of chemistry. As he made his way slowly across the floor the boys all rose and bowed with great humility.

"I hope you are quite well this afternoon, sir," said Finn in respectful accents.

"Quite well," responded the Professor gruffly; "but who is this?"

"That's the new fellow," cried the boys, as they shoved Christmas to the front to answer for himself.

"What's your name?" demanded the Professor.

"Christmas, sir," was the timid answer.

"There was a boy here two years ago named New Years," said the Professor; "are you a relation of his?"

"No, sir," replied Christmas seriously, and wondered greatly at the outburst of laughter which greeted him.

"Christmas!" said the Professor sternly, "I am surprised at the tone of levity which you assume in my presence before you have been in the school twenty-four hours. Has your trunk been examined yet?"

It had not.

“Then,” said Professor Skeesics, “we will perform that task without further delay ;” and, followed by all the rest of the boys, Christmas went into his room, unlocked the trunk, and displayed its contents to the Professor. A large cake was taken from him, in spite of his tearful entreaties, divided up, and consumed with startling rapidity. A bag of oranges shared the same fate, and then the Professor and the boys departed from the room, leaving Christmas to replace his scattered possessions and mourn the loss of his cherished luxuries, which he had intended to consume by himself.

The boys were wild with delight over the success of Drury’s impersonation.

“The best you ever did yet,” cried Douglas, as he slapped the Deacon enthusiastically on the back ; “now, don’t give the thing away, and we’ll play it on him again to-morrow.”

“Here’s your share of the cake ! I saved it for you,” said Dixie Ludlow, putting it into his hand as he spoke.

At this instant a heavy step was heard on the stairs ; Finn uttered a warning cry, and Drury darted into his room and

closed the door ; but before he could tear off his disguise he was arrested by a delighted chorus from the hall, and then Douglas put his head into the room and exclaimed : “ It’s Musseer ! Come out and show yourself, Deacon.”

It was Monsieur Valcour, the popular and lively French teacher, who had come to pay one of his periodical visits to his young friends in the upper hall. The boys all liked “ Musseer,” as he was usually called, and his visits to their quarters were occasions of genuine rejoicing. Knowing his capacity for fun, they were wont to make him their confidant in a great many of their jokes, and it was for this reason that the Deacon was called upon to come out and show himself.

“ Musseer” was delighted with Drury’s impersonation of the Professor. He lifted his hat to him with mock politeness, shook him cordially by the hand, and assured him that it was with pleasure he welcomed his new associate to the school. Then the boys told him how cleverly the Deacon had fooled the new boy—of course, nothing was said about the seizure of the cake—and the French teacher

laughed till he had to hold his sides. And when Christmas finally emerged from his room M. Valcour took pains to address Professor Skeesics in the most deferential manner, thereby dispelling any doubts that might have crept into the new boy's mind.

"Won't you have an orange, Musseer?" cried Finn with a sudden inspiration, as he held out one of the oranges distributed by Professor Skeesics's order.

M. Valcour thanked him cordially, and put the fruit in his pocket, while the boys nudged one another and glanced at Christmas, who was gazing longingly at the last of his cherished bag of oranges as it disappeared into the French teacher's pocket.

Professor Skeesics did not reappear in the upper hall after singing that evening, but Deacon Drury was out in full force, and so were Tommy Finn, and Dixie Ludlow, and Jack Douglas, and all the rest of the mischief-makers of the hall. The sudden advent of Christmas, the ideal butt for school-boy jokes, had awakened in their hearts all the old spirit of deviltry which had lain dormant for

nearly a month. Dixie Ludlow, who had been longing for a new arrival ever since the night Tommy Finn played the waterfall trick on him, was in transports of delight at the prospect of having some fun at another's expense. It is needless to say that Drury, Finn, Douglas, and the rest were in their element as they gathered about the stove, with Christmas in the midst of them.

It was Tommy Finn who opened the evening's entertainment by remarking courteously that he hoped their new friend had a tough skin and did not mind an occasional beating. "As for us," he continued, "we're so accustomed to being licked that we don't think anything about it. Did they flog at the last school you were at, New Years?"

"I have told you already that my name was Christmas, and yet you persist in calling me New Years," answered the new boy testily; "but do they really beat you here? They won't beat me, I can tell you, for I shall run away. I won't stand it."

"Run away!" exclaimed Trafton. "Where are you going to run to? The

conductor on the railroad has a photograph of every boy in the school, and the Doctor gives him ten dollars reward whenever he catches one and brings him back. Then the Doctor licks you again."

"But I'll write home to my mother, and she'll come here with a big policeman and take me home, and put the Doctor in prison if he tries to stop her," said Christmas, beginning to snivel, for the boys' awful stories were playing havoc with his nerves.

"See here," said the Deacon kindly, "you'd better listen to us and take our advice. We've been here more years than you can count, and we know all the ropes. You must be very careful about writing home, because every letter is opened and read, and if you say anything against the school or anybody belonging to it the Doctor tears up the letter and writes another in place of it himself."

"That Professor Skeesics who examined your trunk can imitate any sort of hand-writing," put in Tommy gravely.

"Now you take my advice," continued Drury, "and when you write home praise up the Doctor and all the boys, and tell

them you're having a beautiful time, and be careful not to let on that we don't have any vacations, and that some of us haven't seen our parents in years. Then some time, maybe, you'll get a chance to smuggle a letter out without it's being opened and read. Then you can tell whatever you please. But you'd better not say anything about the boy that was killed here two years ago."

"Killed! how was that?" demanded Christmas fearfully.

"Beaten to death by the Doctor," rejoined the Deacon in sepulchral tones; "but hush, don't talk so loud. We've been forbidden to talk about it, and even his parents don't know that he's dead, but keep on paying his bill every quarter, while Professor Skeesics writes them a letter every once in awhile to make them believe he's alive and well. Come up closer, and I'll tell you about it. It was a fearful scene here the night he died."

"His agonized shrieks rang through the building, and his wails and moans were fairly blood-curdling," whispered Finn, while his teeth chattered at the remembrance.

The boys huddled together about the stove, and listened breathlessly while the Deacon, with an uncanny glare of light shining full on his serious face, described the martyrdom of the boy who had died two years ago with such vivid realism that Christmas sat spellbound and with eyes rolling in horror at the recital; and even the other boys who were in the joke shuddered with unfeigned dread at the harrowing tale. Drury's imitation of the death-rattle in the boy's throat was so effective that, although the lurid story had often been heard before on similar occasions, it was enough, as Tommy Finn said, "to make the cold shivers run up and down your back."

"That was awful!" gasped the unfortunate Christmas as the Deacon ended. "If my mother had known what a place this was, she never would have sent me here in the world. I wish I could go home to-morrow."

"Oh, you'll get used to it in time, so that you won't mind it any more than we do!" said Finn cheerfully; "but there's one thing that's very curious, and that is that last year, on the anniversary of that

boy's death, we could hear groans and cries about midnight that were awful. Some of the boys said it was his ghost, but I don't believe in any such nonsense as that. I don't know whether he'll come around again this year or not, and what's more, I don't care. I can sleep right through it all, and so can the rest of the fellows."

"When was it that the boy was killed?" inquired the new arrival anxiously.

"Oh, somewhere about this time, I think!" rejoined Tommy carelessly. "Shouldn't wonder if to-morrow was the exact anniversary, or perhaps to-night. But you'll know quick enough if there's as much hollering and groaning as there was last year. When was it, Deacon; do you remember?"

Drury was not sure, but thought to-morrow was the date. He yawned indifferently as he spoke, and a moment later went into his own room, whither he was quickly followed by Finn, Douglas, and Dixie.

"I tell you we've got him well scared," said Peter, as soon as the door was closed.

“ He was just beginning to cry when I came away,” observed Ludlow.

“ Well, he'll get something to cry for to-night, when he sees the ghost of that boy coming after him,” said the Deacon grimly.

“ Do you think,” asked Dixie timidly, “ that it's right to frighten him so? He's never been away from home before.”

“ Right !” exclaimed Drury contemptuously ; “ what right has he to be such a mammy coddle? What right has he to be named Christmas, anyway ?”

As this argument appeared absolutely unanswerable Dixie held his peace, and the Deacon's preparations went on without further interruption.

CHAPTER VII.

TOMMY FINN'S HEART TOUCHED BY CHRISTMAS'S GRIEF
— A LESSON IN LETTER-WRITING — WAYLAID BY
“DOZEN” PURDY—A DANGEROUS TRICK—SAVED BY
MONSIEUR VALCOUR.



LOUIS CHRISTMAS was, unfortunately for himself, exactly what Deacon Drury had called him—a “mammy coddle.” He was not by nature any more selfish or effeminate than most boys, but he was the only son of a doting mother, who had petted and coddled him from

infancy, until now, at the age of fourteen, he was not much more than a babe in knowledge of the world and ability to take

care of himself. Moreover, having had no brothers or sisters and but few playmates of his own age, he had never known the necessity of giving up to others, and was selfish because he did not know any better, and domineering because he had always played with very small children. It was not his fault that his name was Christmas, nor had he any reason to be ashamed of that name, which was in fact an honored one in his native city. But the boys in the upper hall did not like his name, and that settled it. He was christened "New Years" by Tommy Finn before he had been in the school an hour, and the nickname clung to him ever after.

But in spite of the injudicious bringing up, which had engendered the faults that I have named, Christmas was by no means a bad boy, and possessed many excellent traits, which only needed to be brought out by the rough-and-tumble life of boarding-school.

The boys of the upper hall among whom he had been thrown were not malicious, but their zeal for fun—and what better fun does a school-boy know than torment-

ing a weak, credulous comrade?—often led them, as in this instance, into acts of positive cruelty. Christmas, who believed all they told him about the Doctor's atrocities, had been worked up by the Deacon's graphic description of the boy's death to a condition of nervous terror, which found relief in a flood of bitter tears.

Finn found him lying face down on his bed sobbing as if his heart would break, and was moved to compassion by the sight. He remembered his own first night away from home, four years before, and how he had cried with homesickness. And he remembered how Big Burns—he was not Big Burns then, only Charley Burns—who occupied the next room, heard his smothered lamentations, and came to his bedside with a great handful of candies to comfort him. Over four years of careless, happy life his memory went back to that first night when he had lain in that very bed on which Christmas was now stretched, and with Charley Burns sitting beside him with his hand on his shoulder telling him to be a man and not cry.

"Come, young fellow," he said, sitting down beside the weeping Christmas, "it will never do for you to make such a fuss as this just because you hear a few ghost stories. If the boys catch you at it you'll never have a moment's peace as long as you stay in the school. Come, brace up, old man."

"I want to go home!" wailed Christmas; "I don't want to be killed by the Doctor and have all my cake and oranges taken away from me by that nasty professor. I'm going to run away to-night and walk home to Boston."

Tommy did his best to console the frightened boy. He brought him some candy, made him a glass of hot lemonade, and finally succeeded in quieting him so that he was able to go out and sit by the stove with the other boys. And these, at Finn's earnest request, turned the conversation into cheerful channels, so that when bedtime came Christmas undressed and went to bed in a comparatively calm frame of mind. Drury was bent on doing the ghost trick that night after the Doctor had made his rounds, but Tommy and Ludlow remonstrated so vigorously

that he consented to postpone that delightful experiment until some more propitious occasion.

Sunday afternoons were generally devoted—unless some important piece of mischief was on foot—to writing letters ; and so it happened that the next day after dinner half a dozen boys were seated about a long table drawn up close to the big stove in the upper hall. Christmas found them there, and Finn made room for him at his end.

“ You must be careful what you write, New Years,” said the Deacon warningly, “ because the Doctor reads every letter that goes out, and if he finds a word of complaint about anything, or any reference to that boy being beaten to death, he’ll make it warm for you.”

“ But how can you write a letter home if you know that the Doctor’s going to read every word of it?” asked the credulous youth.

“ Why, it’s easy enough. We’ve been doing it ever since we can remember,” was the answer. “ Just write a lot of stuff about what a kind, good man the Doctor is, and what nice things you have to eat—”

“And don’t forget to put in a good word for Professor Skeesics, too,” interrupted Finn, “because he likes to be flattered as well as the Doctor.”

“No ; don’t forget Skeesics,” cried Traf-ton ; “and it would be a good idea to tell your folks to send you another cake, and some jam and things, so as to keep the teachers in good-humor. They’re always handy to have here.”

“Do you really think that would be a good idea ?” asked Christmas, with an air of simple credulity that set the boys off into fits of laughter.

“Of course it’s a good idea,” said Tommy as soon as he could control his voice ; “that boy we told you about was killed because the cake he wrote for didn’t come.”

“The cake came the day after he died, and they buried it with him in his coffin,” added the Deacon in melancholy tones.

Acting upon the advice of his friends, Christmas composed a long letter to his mother, which would have astonished the Doctor prodigiously had he intercepted it at the post-office. The Deacon and

Finn, to whom it was submitted, declared that it was just the correct thing and well calculated to make a pleasant impression on the principal.

His letter finished, he walked over to the School House with the intention of studying his Bible lesson. There he was accosted by "Dozen" Purdy, who was always on the lookout for new boys, who were liable to come to school with trunks full of good things from home.

"Hulloa, new fellow! What's your name and where do you come from?" said Purdy.

"I come from Bawston, and my name is Louis Christmas," was the reply.

"Well, Christmas," continued Purdy, "what did you fetch with you from home in the way of cake or pie?"

"I brought a cake and some oranges, but the teacher made me divide it up among the boys in our hall," answered Christmas.

"Teacher! What teacher?"

"An old man with gray whiskers. I think his name is Professor Skeesics."

A light dawned upon Purdy's brain. "Oho!" he said; "and so they played

that old trick on you, did they? Well, I must say I think it's a shame to torment a nice, handsome little fellow like you in that fashion. That wasn't a teacher. It was only one of the boys dressed up to look like one. And he took all your cake and oranges away, did he? Well, the next time you have any things sent you from home, just bring them right over here to the floor above, and we'll take care of them for you. I'll promise you those other fellows won't get a taste of them."

"I've written for some more things, and they'll probably be here next week," said Christmas; "then I'll bring them right over here, and not let those mean boys over there see them."

"That's right," rejoined Purdy with an oily smirk; "we'll take good care of them for you."

He took Christmas up-stairs to his room, said a few words in French to Cropsey, who was lying on his bed, and then introduced him, saying: "Here's a new fellow that's fallen into the hands of those bad young rascals in the upper hall of the Old House. They've taken all his

cake and stuff away from him, and I've told him that we'll take care of the next lot he gets if he'll send it over here."

"Certainly we will," said Cropsey, "and we'll treat you right, too, young fellow. Just tell us if those boys try to tease you, and we'll fix them in mighty short order."

When Christmas returned to the school-room his eyes were opened to the deceit practised on him by his companions in the upper hall, and he gave thanks to the kindly fortune that favored him with two such protectors as Cropsey and Purdy, who seemed to take such a pleasant interest in his welfare. When his box came, he would certainly entrust it to them for safe-keeping.

"I say, New Years, how soon do you think your folks'll send you that box you wrote for?" was the way Tommy Finn saluted the new boy when he made his appearance in the upper hall after the singing lesson that evening.

"When it does come," retorted Christmas pettishly, "I shan't give any of you a single thing, and I don't wish to be called New Years, anyway ; it isn't my name."

“Why, Clara, I’m surprised to hear you speak in such an unladylike way,” said Finn mockingly; “remember the fate of the boy who died two years ago.”

“There was no boy who died here,” rejoined Christmas; “I know it, because two very nice, polite boys in the School House told me so, and there’s no Professor Skeesics, either. They told me that, too.”

“Who told you that?” demanded Douglas.

“Two nice polite boys named Cropsey and Purdy, and they offered to take care of my box when it comes, and not let you have one single taste.”

This announcement was received with a storm of ridicule.

“Yes; they’re delightful boys!” cried Douglas.

“As long as they can get anything out of you,” added Trafton.

“They’ll take good care of your box for you, too,” said Ludlow.

“Perhaps, if you’re real polite, they’ll give you an orange or a piece of cake!” exclaimed Finn.

“Well, that’s more than Professor Skee-

sics did," retorted Christmas ; and his remark brought down the house and restored him to good-humor, for Douglas slapped him on the back, saying :

" You had him there, New Years, and no mistake."

At this moment, tidings of the enlightenment of Christmas having been borne to the ears of Deacon Drury, he emerged from his den and threw himself into the thick of the fray.

" What's this I hear, New Years?" he demanded ; " don't you believe there was a boy killed here two years ago?"

" No, I don't," replied the other boldly.

" Would you believe it," continued the Deacon impressively, " if you were to see his ghost stalking about here at midnight rattling his dry bones and crying out to the Doctor not to beat him any more?"

" N-no, I wouldn't believe it then," answered Christmas ; but he did not speak with much confidence, and it was evident that the ghost story had taken a strong hold on him.

" Well," said the Deacon warningly, " just you look out ; that's all I've got to

say. That ghost showed up here just a year ago, and although we're accustomed to all sorts of horrible things, it scared us half to death. I'm sure I hope it won't be along again this year, but there's no telling what may happen."

The Deacon sighed and looked unutterable things, while the rest of the boys wagged their heads and muttered ominously that it would be awful if the ghost did come.

Christmas tried to pooh-pooh the idea, but he could not conceal his nervousness, and it was evident to every one that the appearance of a ghost in the upper hall would make a profound impression on his weak nerves.

"That settles it," exclaimed the Deacon, as soon as Christmas had gone off to bed; "there'll be a ghost to-night sure, and I'll show you one of my recent inventions in phosphorus."

Finn, remembering the boy's fright the night before, made a feeble remonstrance, but was overruled by the others, who declared that any one who deserted the upper hall and went over, body and soul, to the Jackos, should be made an exam-

ple of. So, no sooner had the Doctor made his rounds than half a dozen of the boys assembled in Drury's den to prepare for one of the most dangerous tricks that was ever invented in a boarding-school. Blankets were hung over the window, and then the Deacon lighted a candle and proceeded to the business of the hour.

From his "laboratory," as he called the cupboard at the end of the room, he brought forth two or three vials and a small glass dish in which he prepared with a degree of mystery, which had its full effect upon his little audience, his magic solution of phosphorus. This done, Douglas was enveloped in one of the Deacon's sheets, on which glaring phosphorescent eyes and nostrils were traced by Drury, and then the ghost was declared complete.

"Now, then," said the Deacon, "take these two sticks in your hand and rattle them together like dry bones. Go out in the hall and moan and cry in front of New Year's door. Holler out, 'O Doctor! don't beat me any more!' and then rattle the sticks together."

Now, it happened that just at this moment Monsieur Valcour, returning from a call in the village, saw a gleam of light through the crevices of the blanket suspended over the Deacon's window. He had heard from Cropsey and Purdy of the stories that had been told to the new boy, and how much he had been frightened by the grewsome description of the death of the boy two years before, so that as soon as he saw the light in the Deacon's window he suspected that some mischief was afoot, and determined to put a stop to it. His years of experience as a teacher had made him familiar with every trick known to the school-boy's calendar, and this was by no means his first encounter with a ghost.

Monsieur Valcour started for the front door of the house with the intention of telling the Doctor what he had seen. Then he changed his mind, and let himself in at the side door and walked rapidly up-stairs. He arrived on the scene of action at exactly the right moment.

The horror-stricken New Years was sitting bolt upright in bed listening to the blood-curdling wails in the hall outside,

when, just as Jack Douglas, arrayed in the white sheet, which he held up with his left hand, was about to enter the room he felt a strong grasp on his shoulder. His moans of "Doctor, don't beat me!" suddenly ceased, and for a moment he thought a real ghost had seized him.

"Thunder and gums!" gasped the Deacon, who had been peering after him, "Musseer has collared him; cut for your rooms!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER MOUNTAIN RENDEZVOUS—CHRISTMAS'S MODEL
LETTER HOME—MOVING OVER TO THE CHESTNUT
HOUSE—A FRENCH LESSON OF MORE THAN ORDINARY INTEREST.



EARLY one afternoon, a short time after the events described in the preceding chapter, Jack Ad-sitt was walking swiftly through the woods in the direction of the Star Wigwam. It was

a clear, cold, sunny day, and the crisp leaves and broken branches crackled under his feet as he walked—exactly the sort of weather to make a boy feel contented with himself and the rest of the

world and hopeful of the future ; but Ad-sitt strode along with downcast eyes and a face that betokened anxiety and vexation. He was not feeling particularly confident of the future just then. It seemed to him that all his well-laid plans had miscarried, and that the Star Wigwam was utterly powerless to deal with the complicated existing evils of the school. He felt half inclined to give the whole thing up, and let the Jackos go to the dogs and take the whole school with them, if they liked. But, then, his courage and better sense appealed to him, and with a strong effort he threw off the feeling of gloom that oppressed him, looked up at the clear sky and bold gray mountain cliffs instead of down at the brown withered leaves and rotting branches that had been cast down by the wind—in short, drank in new hope with the keen, invigorating air of the great hills.

He had called a special meeting of the Star Wigwam, and when he reached his hut he found the other members of the League already assembled there. Sim Barcalow and Ken Boteler were chopping

wood for the fire, which was roaring up the great stone chimney and rapidly drying the cavern with its genial warmth. Pilly Rossiter was arranging the chairs about the table in the order already described, and Jim Pine was preparing to cook some coffee for the refreshment of the party. In a very short time the wigwam was warm, dry, and comfortable. Then Adsitt called the meeting to order, and took his seat at the head of the table, with the others grouped about him. The proceedings were opened by Jim Pine, who remarked :

“ Well, now, I suppose you fellows will acknowledge that I was right in what I said about those youngsters in the upper hall. They’re all the time getting into trouble, and bringing discredit on us as well. I’ll admit they kept pretty quiet for two or three weeks, but this last performance of theirs is worse than anything the Jackos have done since they came here.”

“ Yes,” chimed in Rossiter ; “ that ghost business is one of the most brutal things I ever heard of. It’s lucky Valcour turned up when he did, or the conse-

quences might have been worse than they were. As it is, the boy hasn't got over his fright yet, and has to sleep in one of the Doctor's own rooms, because they're afraid to trust him in the upper hall again."

"Well," said Jim Pine, "I'm in favor of going up into that upper hall and skinning them all alive. Who seconds the motion?"

"I don't," responded Adsitt; "firstly, because those young chaps have been punished enough already, and secondly, because I have evidence that there was no systematic attempt to bully or tease the boy, and that this ghost trick was only a sudden inspiration of the Deacon's on Sunday night. I had quite a long talk with the Doctor yesterday, and he spoke very freely on the subject—more freely than I have ever known him to speak before on any matter connected with the discipline of the school. He told me that he had almost made up his mind to expel the Deacon, Douglas, and one or two more of them, because he believed they had started in to tease and harass young Christmas from the first moment

of his arrival in the school. But, fortunately enough for those young rascals, he received yesterday morning a letter from the boy's mother, enclosing one which he had written to her on Sunday afternoon, and which proves conclusively that up to that moment he had been very kindly treated by the whole crowd. The Doctor let me take the letter, and here it is."

He drew the letter from his pocket, and read what the credulous New Years had written at the instigation of his companions, little dreaming the weight that his words would have in saving them from severe punishment.

"MY DEAR MAMMA : This is a very nice school, and I am having a very nice time. The Doctor is a very kind man, and knows more than anybody I ever saw.

"I room in the upper hall of the Old House. The Doctor and his family sleep down-stairs, and only the best-behaved boys are allowed to live in the upper hall. There is a boy here whom they call the Deacon, because he has made some wonderful inventions. He says he will help me with my lessons. Another boy is

Tommy Finn, and I like him very much. He treats me with great courtesy, just as if I were in Boston. Jack Douglas is another boy who is very kind to me and does everything he can to make things pleasant. There is also a professor whom I like almost as well as the Doctor."

"Who's that?" interrupted Boteler.

"Probably Valcour," rejoined Adsitt, and went on reading.

"I think that as all the boys have been so kind to me I ought to have a box of cake and jam and pies and things to give them. It would make everything very pleasant.

"I wish you would please send me such a box right away, and I am your affectionate son,

"LOUIS CHRISTMAS."

"Well," said Boteler, as Jack finished, "that is proof positive that there was no bullying in the upper hall before they sprung that ghost on him, a few hours after that letter was written. If he'd known what was going to happen to him that very night he wouldn't have been so anxious for a box to treat his friends

with. I've no doubt he's a good-hearted little chap. I think the letter shows that."

"He's not a bad fellow," said Pine, "but he's been spoiled in his bringing up. I had quite a talk with him at recess to-day, and found him about as green a specimen as I ever met in my life. He told me he wanted to go up on the side hill and hunt for woodchuck's eggs, which Deacon Drury said were to be found there in immense numbers. He believes everything he's told. By the way, I've noticed him going round a good deal with Purdy and Cropsey. They'll do him more harm than those young cubs in the upper hall. We ought to warn him for his own sake."

"I think," said Adsitt, "that the best thing we can do is to take hold of that young fellow ourselves. Suppose we ask the Doctor to let him move over to the Chestnut House and take that vacant bed in our room. What do you say, Jim?"

"I don't know," said Pine dubiously; "I'm afraid he'll be something of a nuisance; but if he don't behave himself we can lick him, that's one comfort."

“ He doesn’t need licking as much as he does common-sense,” retorted Adsitt ; “ for it’s just as you say, he’s ready to believe anything he’s told, and he’s had so little experience in the world that he can’t tell his friends from his enemies. Just now he’s afraid of those little chaps, who really don’t mean him any harm, and is fraternizing with the Jackos, who can do anything they like with him. If he rooms with us till the end of the term he’ll be able to hold his end up when he goes back to the upper hall after Christmas. And, besides, I want to convince the Doctor that there’s something in this Star Wigwam of ours, after all. If we offer to take that boy into our own room, and treat him like a younger brother, the Doctor will have more faith in our League than he has now or had that day I talked with him.”

“ And what about Douglas, and Drury, and the rest of them ?” asked Barcalow.

“ Oh, we can let them off this time. They’re scared badly enough as it is ; and, besides, the Doctor’ll see that they don’t escape unscathed.”

And so, at Jack’s request, Christmas

was transferred to the vacant bed in the Chestnut House, where, safely guarded from evil spirits by the two big boys, he enjoyed the first complete night's rest he had known since he came to the school.

At ten o'clock every morning about half a score of the smaller boys were wont to repair to Monsieur Valcour's room in the Chestnut House for their French lesson. Nearly all of Monsieur Valcour's recitations were held in his own room, because he was an excitable man, and liable to explode at any moment, and shout and dance about the room when driven to desperation by his pupils. Like all Frenchmen of breeding, he loved his own language ; and the awful pronunciation common among the boys jarred upon his sensitive nerves till he would leap from his chair and pour out a torrent of mingled French and English on the head of the offender. These paroxysms, although they did not last long, were noisy while they did last and distinctly audible in adjoining recitation rooms ; and on this account the French classes were all banished to Monsieur Valcour's private apartment.

One morning the members of the junior French class all trooped into "Musseer's" room as usual, and saluted him with a chorus of cheerful "*bong jures*," to which he responded with the pleasant courtesy which was an important factor in his popularity.

Purdy, although a big boy, and one well advanced in French, owing to his four years at the Jacot Institute, was a member of this class, because his history class came at the same hour with that composed of the older French pupils. As he spoke French with fluency, M. Valcour deemed him an important addition to the class, because he could converse with him in the Gallic tongue, and in that way familiarize the other boys with the sound of the words. Conscious of his superior knowledge, Purdy disdained to study his lessons, and trusted to good fortune and his previous acquirements to carry him through his recitations. This habit of his M. Valcour was not long in detecting, and it did not increase the very slight esteem in which he held him, and the rest of the Jackos. But he believed that Purdy had some

good in him, and that his faults were due rather to the iniquitous system of the Jacot Institute than to his own nature. So he bore with him as patiently as he could, in the hope that the purer atmosphere of Dr. Dodd's school would work the much-needed reformation in his character.

Purdy did not like the French teacher, and made no secret of the contempt in which he held him. He had had one or two word encounters with M. Valcour, in which he had always been worsted by the quick-witted Frenchman in the most mortifying manner. Moreover, he knew or believed that M. Valcour in his secret heart despised him, and that knowledge did not tend toward making intercourse between the two any the more cordial.

On this particular morning Purdy was in a more than usually sullen state of mind. He had just exchanged a few heated words with Jim Pine, who had found him plaguing one of the smaller boys, and had threatened him with the wrath of the Star Wigwam if he did not desist. Moreover, he had not looked at his lesson, and had reason to believe that

he would be sharply reprimanded if he failed when called upon. But Christmas, who still had a sort of sneaking fondness for him, in spite of Adsitt's repeated warnings, had told him something the day before which he determined to throw in the Frenchman's face on the first occasion that offered itself.

For a time the recitation went on pleasantly and smoothly, with nothing to vary its monotony save occasional excited outbreaks on the part of M. Valcour over some more than ordinarily glaring fault of pronunciation. The younger boys had all learned their lessons, because their affection for their teacher inspired them with a zeal to please him, and besides the end of the term was drawing near, and they wished to obtain as high an average in their studies as they possibly could. Of course the accent of the upper hall was not precisely that of the *Faubourg St. Germain*, but M. Valcour declared that in that respect there had been a noticeable improvement since the beginning of the school year.

Now, Purdy was in the habit of sneering at the other members of the class

and mimicking their pronunciation in an offensive manner. The Deacon, whose accent was as quaint and original as he was himself, was a favorite victim for Purdy's rudeness; and this morning, when Drury began reading in his drawling, hesitating way, Purdy snickered aloud and said: "Is that the way they pronounce French *daouwn* in Connecticut, Deacon?"

"That's the way to pronounce it unless you happen to be a monkey, with a number on your collar and a big, long tail," retorted Drury; and even the teacher joined in the shout of laughter which followed.

"And now," said M. Valcour, "we will hear from this distinguished French critic, who is amiable enough to spend an hour a day with us in order that our accent may be improved. Purdy, will you be good enough to conjugate the present tense, indicative mood, of the verb *aller*?"

Now, Purdy had not looked at his book since the day before, and M. Valcour was perfectly aware of that fact. He spoke French readily enough and

with an excellent accent, but was densely ignorant of the grammar and construction of the language.

"*Je vais, tu vais, il vais,*" he began, and then stopped.

"*Nous vais, vous vais, ils vais,*" suggested the Deacon grimly.

"What's the matter with *on vais*?" inquired Tommy Finn, in the midst of a burst of laughter. The boys all enjoyed Purdy's discomfiture, especially as they saw that he was almost livid with rage. It was mortifying enough for a boy who spoke French as fluently as he did to break down in the present tense of the simplest verb, and that, too, after having made fun of another's pronunciation.

"You might spend an hour every afternoon with Professor Skeesics," said M. Valcour; "I am sure he could give you a great deal of assistance."

Purdy looked up with an angry glitter in his eyes. The chance he had hoped for had come, and he would make use of it.

"I suppose, then, you would divide the spoils with him as usual," he said, with a meaning look at the French teacher.

“What do you mean by that?” demanded M. Valcour.

“I mean just this,” swaggered Purdy ; “when this Professor Skeesics, as you call him, dressed up with false whiskers, and stole all this boy’s oranges, you were around and came in for your share. I think the receiver is as bad as the thief.”

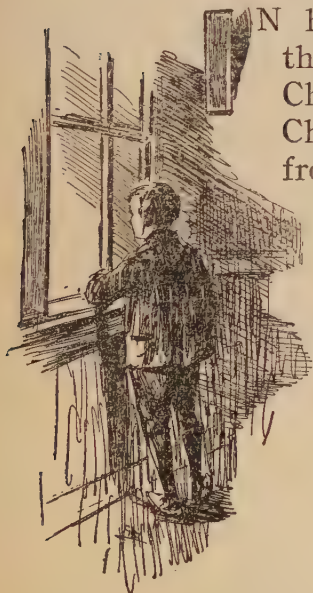
“Mr. Finn,” said M. Valcour, in tones of forced calmness, “will you be good enough to open that door? The room is very close.”

Tommy obeyed, wondering what was going to happen, for the silence of the apartment seemed to portend a storm. For a moment M. Valcour stood quietly gazing at Purdy ; then, with the agility of a cat, he sprang upon him, seized him by his coat-collar, and whirled him through the open door, which he closed after him.

“I think the room is sufficiently aired now,” he remarked, and the recitation went on as if nothing had happened.

CHAPTER IX.

A LONELY BOY—CHRISTMAS LONGS FOR THE UPROAR AND EXCITEMENT OF THE UPPER HALL—PREPARATIONS FOR THE MIDNIGHT BANQUET—THE JACKOS PLOTTING TO RUIN IT.



IN his new quarters in the second floor of the Chestnut House Louis Christmas was safe from his tormentors, and could obtain at night the calm sleep which nature demanded for him. In this respect the change from the noisy upper hall to the room which he shared with Pine and Adsitt was a beneficial one. But he could not help feeling keenly the isolation of his position. To be sure, ever since

the night of the ghost episode none of the boys of the upper hall had teased or annoyed him in any way, and one or two of the chief participants in that affair had told him in off-hand, boyish fashion, that they were sorry for what they had done, and had not intended to frighten him so much. Nevertheless, he could not help seeing that his society was not courted by any of them, and that he was never asked to participate in any of the amusements in which Finn, Drury, Ludlow and the rest were leaders. He was not excluded, but he was seldom urged to join in the fun. His room-mates, of course, had their associates of their own age, and so perforce he was left a good deal to the companionship of the Jackos in the School House, who made a good deal of him because they were glad enough to have an ally in the camp of the enemy.

Through the efforts of the Star Wigwam, the Jackos had been shorn of much of their influence in the school. Some of the best of them had, indeed, gone over to the other side, and might be seen every afternoon on the playground engaged in the athletic sports for which Dr. Dodd's

pupils had always been famous. It was a healthy sign, this, and one which made glad the hearts of Adsitt and his followers.

“There’s some hope for fellows who take to coasting and skating as naturally as those Jackos do,” said Jack one day as he was putting on his skates at the edge of the frozen river.

“Yes,” said Pine, who was similarly engaged, “and I think we can claim some of the credit for the improvement in the school, though there hasn’t been as much fighting as I expected. In fact, I think we’ve done our work very quietly.”

“And that tallies with what I said to you the day we organized the Wigwam,” replied Adsitt. “The work we’ve done has been *through* the other fellows—the upper hall particularly—down to the Jackos.”

Adsitt was right. The influence of the Wigwam had been felt through all the strata of the school down to the Jackos, and even the Doctor, though he had not spoken, had been forced to admit that Jack’s scheme had turned out much better than he had ever expected it would ; but although a good many of the Jackos

had capitulated, so to speak, there still remained, entrenched in their stronghold over the school-room, a few sullen, discordant spirits, who kept to themselves, and longed for a chance to "get even" with the Adsitt crowd, and regain some of their old ascendancy over their fellows. Cropsey and Purdy were the leaders in this set, and they made every effort to conciliate Christmas, because they thought he was simple enough to tell them whatever they might ask him. Purdy was in disgrace now, on account of his insolence to Monsieur Valcour, while Cropsey was in very bad odor with the Doctor because of his persistent misbehavior. It was whispered among the boys that neither of the two would be permitted to return to the school after the Christmas holidays.

In his secret heart Christmas sighed for the excitement and uproar of the upper hall. He had learned a great deal during his few weeks at boarding-school—a great deal that was not laid down in the regular course of studies. He had learned that a boy can never get along unless he is willing to adapt himself to

school life and endure good-naturedly the jokes and rough-and-tumble tricks of his comrades. He saw that Tommy Finn, the most popular boy of his age in the school, never got angry when any jokes were played on him, and he had learned, moreover, that when Tommy first joined the school four years before, the other boys had, to quote his own words, "played it on him early and late."

"At first," explained Tommy, "I used to feel awful, and many's the time I've laid awake to cry after the others were asleep, but I found out pretty quick that that wasn't the way to get along, so I made up my mind I wouldn't care about it at all. Big Burns was here then, and he advised me not to get mad and not to complain to the Doctor, no matter what they did to me. You oughtn't to have got so scared that night we played the ghost on you, New Years; if it hadn't been for that you'd be living in the upper hall now."

So Christmas mourned for the joys that he could not partake of, and wished that he might have a chance to redeem him-

self and show not only that he could take a joke as well as anybody, but also that he was not the "mammy-coddle" they called him.

And this feeling grew stronger within him as the end of the term drew near, and he learned that the upper hall was planning a grand banquet to take place on Monday evening after the Doctor had made his rounds. How he longed for an invitation to that midnight supper! He would have risked anything—even expulsion—to have taken a seat at that teeming board on terms of perfect equality with the other guests.

All Monday afternoon Drury, Finn, Douglas, and Ludlow could be seen running to and fro between the Old House and the village bearing mysterious packages containing the ingredients of the feast. Christmas watched them sadly from the window of Purdy's room in the School House.

"What are all those youngsters doing with those bundles?" asked Cropsey, who was lying on his bed, gazing idly out of the window.

"They're going to have a supper in

the upper hall to-night," responded Louis thoughtlessly, without looking up.

"Ah!" said Cropsey; "what time are they going to have it?"

"As soon as the Doctor has made his rounds. They'll probably sit down about half-past ten."

"Indeed!" said Cropsey, with a meaning glance at Purdy, and then the two fell to talking in French, while Christmas gazed longingly out of the window, and wished that he still lived in the upper hall.

From time immemorial it had been the custom in the upper hall to celebrate the close of the fall term with some sort of a merry-making, organized on the commonwealth plan. The year before this annual function had taken the form of a skating party on the last Saturday of the term, with a picnic in the woods by the river-bank, where they ate their dinner, and warmed themselves at huge bonfires kindled in the shelter of a high cliff. But this year the ice was not thick enough to permit of a repetition of the skating party. Besides, there was a strong feeling in favor of some different sort of festivity.

“ We ought never to do the same thing two years running,” was the way in which Jack Douglas voiced the sentiments of the upper hall at a meeting held to discuss the all-important matter.

But what should it be ? Dixie Ludlow proposed a grand moonlight coasting party on the coast, but that was voted too cold a sport, and the same objection was raised when the Deacon proposed that they should catch some rabbits (in a trap of his own contrivance) and cook them over an open fire on the mountain-side.

“ I’ll tell you what to do ! ” cried Tommy Finn suddenly ; “ let’s have a fine supper right here in the hall, after the Doctor has made his rounds. It will be nice and warm, and we can have no end of fun.”

His suggestion caught the fancy of the upper hall instantaneously, and it was resolved by a unanimous vote to have the supper on Monday night at eleven o’clock.

“ Now,” continued Finn, when he saw that his motion was carried, “ I propose that we have everything done in regular

first-class style, the same as if this was a big dinner at Delmonico's. We ought to have committees to attend to all the different things—to collect the dues and buy the grub, and see that everything is done all right. You remember that supper we had, or rather that we were going to have, last year, when we all got to fighting about who was to sit at the head of the table, and the Doctor heard the noise and came up, and collared us before we'd eaten a thing? Well, we don't want any more of that business this time. I vote that this meeting adjourn till to-morrow—that's Saturday—night, and, in the mean time, the Deacon and I will draw up a paper with the rules and regulations, and a list of the different committees on it, to submit to the meeting to-morrow night."

Tommy's proposition having been received with favor, he and the Deacon retired to the latter's den, to make their plans for the great banquet.

The next evening, as soon as the singing lesson was over, the boys made a rush for the upper hall, and seated themselves about the soapstone stove, eager

to learn the result of Drury and Finn's deliberations.

It was the latter who stood up to address the meeting, reading from a large sheet of foolscap :

“Grand midnight banquet ! Regular annual entertainment of the association of the upper hall of the Old House. Admittance, fifty cents, payable in advance. The Table Committee will take charge of the hall immediately after the departure of our revered principal. Five minutes later the entertainment will begin.”

“Five minutes ! Why, you never can set the table in five minutes !”

“Better say half an hour !”

“Hold on a minute !” said Tommy, “and don't interrupt till I get through. In order to accomplish this apparently impossible feat, the committee will have recourse to the patent double-back-action-lightning-change supper-table, invented by the distinguished scientist and hoary recluse, Deacon Peter Drury.”

At the conclusion of this carefully prepared sentence there was a storm of laughter and applause, which did not subside till the Deacon had arisen and bowed

to the assembly in his usual stiff, awkward way. Then Tommy went on :

“Guests will appear at this banquet in their stocking feet, and each one must bring his own glass. Out of respect to the well-known prejudices of our esteemed principal, Dr. Dodd, no loud conversation or boisterous behavior will be allowed at the table. An efficient Bouncing Committee will see that this regulation is strictly enforced. The appointment of the following committees is respectfully suggested : Committee on Supplies, to collect dues and purchase the grub ; Committee of Public Safety, to patrol the staircase and listen at the ventilator ; Table Committee, to lay out the banquet ; Committee on Decorations, to hang blankets at the windows ; Bouncing Committee, to preserve order.”

The boys had spent a great deal of time in the preparation of this elaborate document, the reading of which was interrupted from time to time by unmistakable signs of delight and approval.

“ If the supper's as big a success as that prospectus it'll beat anything we ever

had in the upper hall !" exclaimed Trafton enthusiastically.

"Who's going to serve on the committees? There'll be room for all of us there," said Douglas.

After some discussion and a little wrangling the committees were all chosen. Drury, Finn, Ludlow, and Douglas were entrusted with the task of collecting the dues and investing them to the best possible advantage at the village store. Willy Trafton, who had the eye of a lynx, and could hear the Doctor's footfall at incredible distances, was appointed for picket duty, with two assistants. Smithers, Ludlow, and Gerald Adsitt were put in charge of the window decorations, while Drury, Finn, and Douglas were to superintend the table arrangements and stand ready to serve on the Bouncing Committee if their services were required.

What the Deacon's scheme for lighting table service was he declined to say, and as the eventful hour drew near many were the speculations indulged in by the youngsters who clustered about the big stove in the upper hall. The smaller boys, who regarded Drury with a veneration

that bordered upon superstition, were particularly stirred up over this new invention, and fully expected to see the supper borne in by black gnomes conjured up for the occasion by the Deacon's magic arts.

As soon as study hour was over the boys all hurried up to the hall, and were harangued by Finn and Drury :

“ Now, remember, the minute the Doctor is out of sight we want three tables and enough chairs for every one carried out and arranged here in line. Then all of you get back to your rooms and stay there till you hear the signal to come out. Ludlow and Smithers and Adsitt of course will see to the windows, and Trafton can keep a lookout on the stairs. Now, we want a couple of mattresses right away—good stiff ones. We've got to use them for the patent lightning service.”

Willing hands tore two mattresses from the beds and bore them into the Deacon's den, which was forthwith given over to the Table Committee. The room was furnished with a large closet extending far under the eaves, and on the floor of this closet two of the mattresses were placed, covered with sheets, and the vari-

ous good things carefully arranged on them. Then Drury took his own upper mattress, treated it in a similar way, and shoved it carefully under his bed, the white counterpane which hung down concealing it from view. Everything was now ready for the grand banquet, and they had only to wait for the Doctor to make his rounds and vanish down the long winding staircase when the festivities would begin. When the ten o'clock bell rang every light was out and every boy snugly ensconced in bed. A few minutes later Dr. Dodd appeared with his lamp, looked into every room, and then proceeded on his way with a pleasant good-night. Many a youngster drew a long breath of relief as he was heard leaving the Deacon's room. What if he had looked into the closet or under the bed! The echo of his footsteps died away in the lower part of the house, and was followed by the soft patter of Trafton gliding barefoot to the head of the stairs to make sure that all was right. Then came the Committee on Decoration, bearing heavy blankets for the windows and a rug to put over the ventilator. At the

same time tables and chairs were brought out and placed in position ; then the lamps were lighted, and the boys retired to their rooms to await the summons from the Table Committee, who were immured in the Deacon's eyry.

And now the mattresses were dragged forth and carefully carried out and placed end to end on the tables without disturbing the cans and dishes arranged on them, the sheets were hastily draped to look like table-cloths, and then the signal was given, and the eager company streamed out into the hall in their stocking feet. A quickly repressed cry of delight burst from them as they beheld the long board with the good things temptingly displayed on the white sheets.

“ Hold on a minute ! ” cried the Deacon, as they were about to sit down ; “ the members of the Committee of Public Safety will take turns doing picket duty. If anybody comes, the Table Committee will grab these mattresses, with the things on them, and rush them into my room. The rest of us must stand ready to fight. If it's the Doctor, we'll all get to bed as quick as we can. Now, let's eat.”

CHAPTER X.

THE GRAND BANQUET—TOMMY FINN'S SPEECH—AN
AWFUL EXPLOSION—APPEARANCE OF THE DOCTOR
—THE GREAT CROPSEY AND BOTELER FIGHT.



IT was a jolly supper—"the best ever known in the history of the upper hall," said Tommy Finn, than whom nobody at the table was better qualified to judge. The Committee on Supplies had performed the duties entrusted to them with a degree of discretion that met with the hearty approval of the critical company who discussed the dainties provided for them, and gave thanks that the money had been so ju-

diciously expended. At each end of the long table stood a large pitcher of lemonade, and these were flanked by a brave array of solids, including canned ham and tongue, peaches, jam, crackers and cheese, cake and pie. Deacon Drury sat at the head of the table and directed the revels, keeping a watchful eye on Smithers, to see that he did not eat more than his share.

“What made you take the trouble to put on full dress, Deacon?” asked Ludlow, with his mouth full of jam; and a laugh went round the table at Drury’s comical appearance, to which attention was now drawn for the first time. He was attired in a night-shirt, open at the neck to reveal a red-flannel undershirt; his head was crowned with an ancient straw hat that he had put on in a fit of absence of mind, while his feet were adorned with a pair of gray woollen socks. But not one of the boys was fully dressed, some having coats on, others appearing in their shirt-sleeves, while not a few wore their night-shirts. The hall was warm, however, and, boy-like, they never thought of cold or rheumatism, but aban-

doned themselves with light hearts to the enjoyment of the moment. No boisterous conversation was allowed, and the Deacon gave notice at an early stage of the festivities that the Bouncing Committee would make short work of anybody who threw cake or other missiles at any one else. "For I want you fellows to remember," he said, "this is no ordinary lunch, but a regular banquet, the same as we read about in the papers, and we're going to wind up with speeches and toasts just as if we were at Delmonico's."

And sure enough, when the boys had satisfied their appetites the Deacon rapped on the table with his knife and gave the first toast of the evening—"Our respected principal, may he enjoy a sound sleep and pleasant dreams to-night."

The next toast, proposed by Jack Douglas, was "The destruction of the Jackos," and it was drunk with so much enthusiasm that the chairman threatened to call upon the Bouncing Committee if the boys did not moderate their transports and give the Doctor a chance to obtain some sleep; "for," he continued, "we don't want him to come up

here and catch us just as the fun is beginning."

Then Tommy Finn arose with his lemonade glass in his left hand and his right behind his back. Tommy was a fluent speaker and possessed a remarkable vocabulary, due to the fact that he had been kept in every Saturday for four years and compelled to commit to memory long passages from Shakespeare and other English classics. Consequently the boys all listened eagerly as he began to speak.

"Gentlemen of the upper hall," said Finn, with an elaborate bow, "I rise to propose a toast which I am sure you will all drink with respect and enthusiasm. Our festive board to-night is illumined by one whose giant intellect dominated the preparations for this feast, and perfected the marvellous invention by whose aid the committee were enabled to serve their guests with a celerity which is absolutely without parallel in the history of the upper hall."

Tommy paused for breath, while a murmur of admiration at his splendid rhetoric went round the table.

"I need scarcely say," continued the

speaker, "that I allude to the hoary sage who presides, with a dignity becoming his advanced years, over this scene of lightsome revelry. My friends, let us fill our glasses and drink to the health of Peter Drury, the worthy and venerated Deacon of the upper hall."

With these words Tommy drew his right hand from behind his back, and hurled a triangle of cranberry-pie with such deadly aim that it took the Deacon full in the face, while the boys uttered a shout of laughter loud enough to be heard in the Chestnut House.

"Thunder and gums!" gasped the astonished Deacon, as he wiped the red, sticky jam out of his eyes; but just then Willy Trafton, who was taking his turn at sentry duty on the lower landing, came flying up stairs with the warning cry, "Cheese it! the Jackos are coming; I just saw them sneaking over from the School House."

In an instant every boy was on his feet. The Table Committee seized the mattresses and carried them into Drury's room. One was cast into the closet, another was shoved under the bed.

“Here,” cried the Deacon, seizing one end of the third mattress, and with the aid of the others the last section of the banqueting board, still covered with the remains of the feast, was carefully lifted up and deposited in the bed, and the blanket and quilt drawn up over it. Meantime, the lamps had been removed to a place of safety, and the three tables piled up as a barricade across the hall. Behind them stood the boys, drawn up in order of battle, and armed with whatever weapons of defence they could lay their hands on in the excitement of the moment. Some had bed-slats, others empty or half-empty cans hastily snatched up from the table ; several, profiting by Finn’s example, had pieces of pie in their hands. Footsteps were heard approaching up the staircase, and four or five Jackos, headed by Cropsey and Purdy, stood in the doorway.

“Where’s the grub all gone to?” was the demand, for the condition of the floor showed plainly that a feast had been in progress.

“It’s gone where you won’t get any of it,” retorted Finn boldly.

"We'll see about that," said Cropsey roughly; "come along, fellows," and he started to climb over the barricade of tables. But before they could cross it the upper hall fell upon them as one man, while pie and tin cans flew through the air. The Jackos were staggered by the sudden onslaught, and before they could recover from the shock the Deacon rushed out of his room, bearing in his hand what looked like a small black ball, to which was attached a blazing fuse.

"Look out!" he shouted, "it's going to explode," and with these words he hurled it into the midst of his foes. It fell to the ground and lay there spluttering and sizzling, while the boys fled to places of safety, and the Jackos tumbled precipitately down-stairs and into the arms of the Doctor, who was coming up with a lamp in his hand to see what the disturbance was about.

"What does this mean?" demanded the principal angrily; and then Drury's bomb exploded with a noise that shook the house. The Doctor rushed up-stairs and beheld, through the smoke that filled the hall, the half-clad forms of a dozen scared

and excited boys coming from their places of concealment to see the havoc of the explosion.

"What is the meaning of all this uproar?" demanded Dr. Dodd; and at the sound of his awful voice the Deacon darted into his room and clambered into bed in the midst of the plates of pie, saucers of jam, and other remnants of the repast. Pulling the blanket up to his chin, he simulated sleep by a series of deep snores.

Meantime, the Doctor had passed the barricade of tables and stood surveying the startled group before him.

"Who fired that pistol?" he demanded sternly.

"It wasn't a pistol, it was Drury's patent bombshell," was the reply.

"Where is Drury?"

The Deacon's snores answered the question.

"Drury, are you asleep?" called the principal through the open door.

"Yes, sir," answered the Deacon briskly, taken completely off his guard.

Two or three boys snickered out loud, but the Doctor silenced them with a look.

while he commanded Drury to come out immediately. But no power on earth could have suppressed the laughter when the Deacon appeared in the doorway with the remains of the cranberry-pie on his face, and his legs and night-shirt smeared with the jam and other edibles on which he had lain in the bed.

"Drury, what have you been doing?" demanded the Doctor.

"Nothing, sir," responded the Deacon, as he wiped some of the pie out of his ear.

"What made that explosion a few moments ago?"

"Those fellows came up here to make a fight, and I threw a bomb at them to frighten them off. I didn't think it would make such a noise."

"Don't you know it's against the rules to have gunpowder in your rooms?"

"This wasn't regular gunpowder," replied the Deacon; "it was some stuff I made myself, but I must have got it too strong."

"I'll tell you how it was, Dr. Dodd," said Finn, stepping forward: "We fellows here were sitting quietly having

something to eat, not making a bit of noise, only talking among ourselves, so as not to disturb the house. The first thing we knew up came those Jackos from the School House and pitched into us. Of course they're bigger than us, and we didn't have any show, and the Deacon got excited and lit one of his bomb-shells and threw it in among them. Of course we ought to have been in bed instead of sitting up and eating, but we never would have made a bit of noise if those fellows hadn't come to pick a fight and steal our things."

"How many of you were concerned in this?" asked the principal.

"The whole upper hall," came the answer in chorus.

"Very well. Ten marks apiece, and bounds for the rest of the term. Now go back to your beds."

* * * * *

"Fight! Ken Boteler and Ten Cropsey!" screamed Finn, putting his head through the doorway of the upper hall and then disappearing instantly down the staircase, followed by all the boys.

"Cropsey and Boteler are going to fight

it out back of the gymnasium !" was the cry that rang through the Chestnut House at exactly the same moment, and caused a frantic exodus in the direction indicated.

Cropsey and Boteler were found taking off their coats and tying their suspenders about their waists, surrounded by a rapidly increasing ring of spectators. Adsitt and Pine were helping Boteler, while Purdy and Durand looked after the Jacko champion. The trouble had come about in this way : Boteler, usually a peaceable fellow, had been so wrought up on hearing of the Jackos' attack on the upper hall banquet, that he had called Cropsey a coward and a bully, and had told him in the presence of half the school that he was afraid to touch any one of his size or anywhere near his size, for Cropsey was fully two inches taller and twenty pounds heavier than the slender, sinewy Southerner who defied him.

" Well, I'm not afraid of a blamed sneaking rebel like you, anyway," said Cropsey contemptuously, and might perhaps have continued in the same strain had not his mouth been closed by a re-

sounding blow from the open palm of Boteler's right hand. Colonel Boteler, the boy's father, had been a distinguished artillery officer in the Confederate service, and his son would never permit any slighting allusion to the cause for which his father died.

At this juncture Adsitt and Pine jumped in between the combatants, saying, "Not here on the playground; if you're going to fight, come around behind the gymnasium and have it out."

And it was for this reason that the flying columns from the Old House and Chestnut House found the two champions preparing for combat in a quiet spot screened by the gymnasium and bowling-alley from the sight of the teachers.

Now, fighting was strictly forbidden in Dr. Dodd's school, and as a regular set-to of this nature occurred very rarely none of the boys were up in the rules of the prize-ring. It was arranged that the rounds should last for two minutes, unless terminated before that by a knock-down. When time was called Cropsey stepped into the ring with a vicious leer on his face and his fists doubled up in ugly fighting

fashion. Boteler looked calm, pale, and resolute. Cropsey, looking down on him from his superior height, sneered contemptuously, and then lunged at him with a heavy right-hander, which the other avoided by stepping aside. Cropsey followed him up, aiming blow after blow, which his adversary skilfully avoided or parried, until after a terrific lunge the Jacko almost lost his balance, and Boteler got in two stinging blows on his face and then got knocked off his feet by a swinging back-hand stroke which broke down his guard and struck him squarely on the side of his head.

“That’s right, tire him out,” whispered Adsitt, as he sponged his man off. “He’s puffing like a whale now.”

Cropsey was indeed puffing as he came up to the scratch, for the twenty pounds extra weight which he carried were not so much brawn and muscle, but more than useless fat. Again he chased his adversary about the ring for nearly a minute, and still the latter contrived to dodge or parry every blow that was aimed at him, until a left-hander sent him to earth a second time amid the triumphant

shouts of the Jackos. But Boteler was game and tough and could take any amount of punishment without losing his pluck and becoming demoralized, as Cropsey had hoped. On the contrary, there was a resolute look in his bruised face and an angry glitter in his eye when he toed the scratch the third time that had a very disheartening effect on his adversary, who was now completely winded, and in no condition to repeat his former exhausting tactics. But before a blow had been struck the boys on the outskirts of the crowd caught sight of a familiar figure approaching at rapid strides, and a warning shout of "Look out! there's the Doctor!" fell upon the ears of the fighters. "I'll finish this later—if you like," sneered Cropsey, who was only too glad of an excuse to stop. But Kenwood's blood was up. "Put up your hands!" he screamed, and threw himself upon his unwieldy foe with a fury that fairly staggered him. In vain did the Jacko try to dodge the blows that were rained on him. Boteler's right hand played a tattoo on his face and ribs that made fearful havoc with both his nerve and his personal appearance.

"Clinch him !" yelled Pine, almost beside himself with excitement.

"Stop !" roared the Doctor, breaking into the ring just in time to see Boteler throw himself upon his adversary, twine his left arm round his neck, and bend him back almost double.

"Stop this instant !" cried the Doctor, but Boteler paid no heed, for he had Cropsey's head clasped tightly under his left arm, and was hammering him with all the strength of his right one with the exultant feeling that every blow was helping to break the backbone of the whole Jacko element. When they were separated Cropsey fell to the ground almost senseless, and Boteler, aided by his friends, began to put on his coat and vest, listening sullenly to the Doctor, who for once was in a towering passion.

"Boteler, you heard me speak to you just now ?"

"Yes, sir."

"And yet you dared to disobey me—to go on fighting when I commanded you to stop. Is this one of the good works of your Star Wigwam ?" he continued sarcastically, glancing at the other members

of the League, who were grouped together, looking very sheepish. "Is this the way you intend to reform the school and set a good example to your juniors? I shall hold you all responsible for this disgraceful affair, and I am sorry and ashamed to find *you* here, John Adsitt, after all your promises to me of what you were going to accomplish with your League. Go to your rooms, all of you, and stay there until study hour."

The Jackos, who had listened to this harangue with unconcealed triumph, escorted their fallen chief to his room in the School House, while the members of the Wigwam, who but a moment before had been jubilant over the prowess of their champion, moved slowly over to the Chestnut House, looking as dejected as if they had all been well thrashed by their opponents.

Jack Adsitt seated himself on the edge of the bed, with his chin resting on his hands, and for several minutes stared gloomily at the floor without speaking. He was bitterly disappointed and disheartened at the unfortunate affair which had brought down on the heads of the

Wigwam members the Doctor's direst wrath at the very moment when he had flattered himself that their efforts in behalf of good order would receive generous recognition at the hands of the principal.

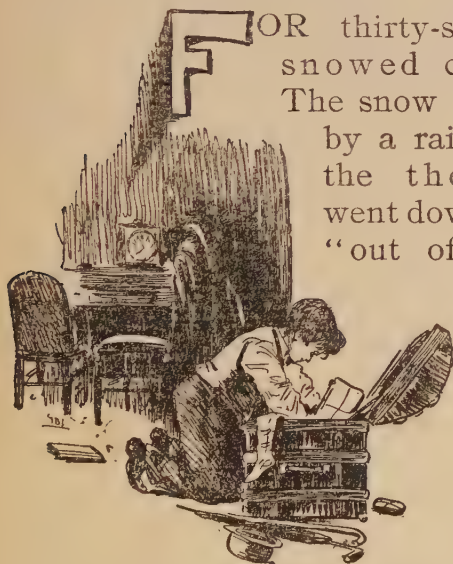
"It's too blamed bad !" he said at length to Jim Pine, who was with him.

"Indeed it was," replied the other ; "if the Doctor had only been five minutes later Ken would have knocked him silly ; but anyway it was the prettiest fight we've had in the school for more than a year"—a speech which shows that boys as well as men have different ways of looking at things.

Jack rose from his seat and went over to the window. There was a cold, dull gray sky overhead, and fine flakes of snow were beginning to fall. "It's set in for a heavy storm," he said, "and maybe we'll get a little coasting before we leave for home."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SNOW-STORM—COASTING BY NIGHT—ADrift ON
THE RIVER—CHRISTMAS SHOWS PLUCK—SAVING A
STRANGER—A BIG SURPRISE.



FOR thirty-six hours it snowed continuously. The snow was followed by a rain, and then the thermometer went down and down, "out of sight," as Finn said, covering the snow with a firm, hard, dazzling crust, and freezing the river, which had been almost free from ice, from shore to shore. But the ice was not safe, and the Doctor issued orders that none of his pupils should venture on it with sled or skates.

But there was fine sport to be had coasting on the smooth crust, and in spite of the cold, which moderated as the afternoon wore on, the boys made the most of it, for it was the last day of the school term. To-morrow would be given over to examinations, with an entertainment of music, recitations and compositions in the evening, and then the following morning would see all the boys on their way home for the Christmas holidays. Dixie Ludlow had packed his trunk three days before. Boys like Finn and the Deacon, who had gone home for innumerable vacations, never thought of packing till the very last day. In the presence of youngsters like Dixie and Christmas they affected an indifference to the approaching journey which invested them with an air of *blasé* cynicism that amazed and dazzled their juniors.

"I say, Christmas," said Purdy, as he met the new boy in the school-yard late in the afternoon, "do you want to have a little fun to-night on your own account?"

"Yes," said Christmas; "what is it?"

"Well," continued the other, "I don't know whether you've got the nerve to do

what I want you to or not, but if you have we can have some glorious old sport to wind up the year with. The boys say you're a mammy-coddle, and I'm going to give you a chance to do what none of them would dare to do. How would you like to come out to-night and take a moonlight coast down the hill on the crust and out on the river?"

"It would be grand!" cried Christmas eagerly; then his face clouded, and he said hesitatingly, "But you remember the Doctor told us we were not to go sliding on that ice."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Purdy contemptuously; "what do we care for the old Doctor? If you run and ask him every time you want to do anything you'll never have any fun, and you'll be nothing but a mammy-coddle to the end of your days. I don't wonder the boys all laugh at you, if that's the way you talk whenever there's anything to be done."

"All right, I'll go," said Christmas, turning a little red as he spoke, for he had grown thoroughly ashamed of his effeminacy during his few weeks at boarding-school, and was consumed with a secret

desire to do something—he cared not what—to prove that he possessed as much courage as any of his comrades.

“That’s the way to talk!” cried Dozen, patting him on the back. “Show ’em that you’ve got some sand in you and they’ll never try to plague you any more.”

It was arranged that they should meet at eleven o’clock by the wood-pile, where they kept their sleds, and accordingly at that hour Christmas crept softly out of his room and made his way to the place of rendezvous. He was able to do this unobserved because both his room-mates were away making an evening call in the village, a privilege which the Doctor had granted them two days prior to the fight. Purdy and Christmas took their sleds and stole noiselessly across the road, keeping in the shadows of the trees as much as possible, climbed the fence and walked along over the crust to the brow of the hill that looked down over the valley where lay the frozen river, half a mile away. Between its dark surface and the place where they stood stretched a glittering expanse of dazzling white crust.

There was a clear track between them and the river.

"Do you really think it's safe?" asked Christmas fearfully.

Purdy turned on him a glance of infinite contempt. "No," he said; "you'd be much safer if you were in bed; and if you want to go there you can. *I'm* going coasting."

He threw himself face downward on his sled and started slowly down the hill, Christmas following close behind him.

Adsitt and Pine, walking homeward through the village street, noticed the two dark figures standing on the brow of the hill beyond the fence, but they were engaged in an earnest talk about the Star Wigwam, and thought nothing of them till they reached their room and found it empty.

"Jim!" exclaimed Adsitt, "that boy's hat and clothes are gone too. Do you think it could have been him we saw over the way?"

"Yes," said Pine, "and he's gone coasting with some other fellow—a Jacko probably. And the river!—don't you remember it was just about breaking up when we crossed the bridge? See here, Jack,

you go over to the School House and the Old House and see if you can find him there. I'll run across the road and see if they've gone down the hill."

They started without an instant's delay. Pine caught up a light sled as he passed the wood-pile, and ran across the street, dragging it after him. He found the place at the brow of the hill where the two boys had stood. There were marks of their heavy boots on the smooth crust, and he could plainly see the tracks of two pairs of runners leading down into the valley toward the river. Seating himself on his sled he started down the hill-side, moderating his speed by pressing his heels into the snow, and following the faint indentations of the other sleds through the break in the stone fence and on down to the river-bank. The dark current flowed swiftly by. The tracks ended at the edge of the stream. They must have plunged into the river and been swept downward by the rushing tide. But they could have seen the river in time to stop themselves. A great cake of ice floated by, and a sudden understanding lit up Jim Pine's mind.

They had steered their sleds out on the frozen surface of the river, the ice had become dislodged and had drifted away down stream, carrying them with it. The best he could hope was that they were on a cake large enough to sustain their weight until they could be rescued. There was not a moment to be lost. He turned and ran up the long slope as fast as he could and found Jack Adsitt, who had finished his unsuccessful search, just crossing the street to meet him. In a few words Pine told him what he had discovered, and ended with the inquiry, "What shall we do?"

"Go right to the Doctor," said Adsitt.

"The Doctor's away to-night, and won't be home till very late. We can't wait a minute."

"Then," exclaimed Adsitt, "we'll call out the Star Wigwam, and go down the river-bank till we find them. It will be a feather in the Wigwam cap if we do," he added significantly.

All the members of the League roomed in the Chestnut House, and in a few minutes they were dressed and on their way to the river.

“Best take my bob-sled,” said Adsitt ;
“it will help us down the hill, and we
may need it coming back.”

They all knew what he meant, but not
a word was said as they ran across the
road, scaled the fence, and made for the
brow of the hill, dragging the sled behind
them. They all seated themselves on the
long bob-sled, with Jack Adsitt at the
helm, and started down the long hill so
as to strike the river below the bend at a
point about half a mile below the place
where the other boys had gone out on the
ice.

Meanwhile, Christmas and Purdy were
shivering on the middle of a great cake
of ice that was drifting rapidly down
stream. It had happened just as Jim
Pine imagined. The weight of the two
boys and their sleds had dislodged the
ice from the shore, and before they knew
what had happened, they were floating
down the dark river on a frail icy raft,
which was in momentary danger of
breaking in two with its own weight.
Fearing this catastrophe, they sat per-
fectly still on their sleds, and hoped that
they might drift close enough to the

shore to make good their escape. The moon had gone behind a cloud, and a cold wind which had arisen dashed the water over the ice floe from time to time, till it seemed as if it was certainly sinking. Both boys fully realized the peril of their position, and for a time it was a struggle for both of them to keep from giving way to their fears.

During the first moments of their perilous sail Christmas had been more frightened than his companion, but very soon his terror gave way to a strange feeling of exaltation. At last the wished-for opportunity had come which should prove that he was not a "mammy-coddle," as the boys called him, but as courageous as any of them. He might be drowned, but at least he would meet death bravely, and if Purdy escaped with his life he would bear witness that he had not uttered a moan or a whimper.

"This is awful!" gasped Purdy, his teeth chattering as he spoke; "we'll both be drowned. Oh dear! what did we ever come out here for?"

"See here," said Christmas, and he was surprised to find his voice so cool and

steady, "it won't do us any good to get frightened. We want to keep our wits about us now if we never did before. Pretty soon we'll get near enough to one shore or the other to make a rush for it, and we must be ready for the chance when it comes. So, brace up, old man, and keep cool."

"Well, you're cool enough anyway," rejoined the other.

"I've got to be—it's a cool place," said Christmas cheerfully.

Purdy was silent for a moment, and then burst out: "Say, look here, young fellow, if I ever said you were a milksop I'm sorry for it, and I take it back right here. You've got more pluck than any boy I ever saw, and if we ever get out of this alive the whole school will know it, too."

He stretched out his hand as he spoke, and Christmas felt his own cheeks burn as he grasped the cold palm and wrung it, heartily and gratefully. He had heard no words like this since he joined the school. Adsitt and Pine had been more than kind to him, but it had been in a pitying, compassionate way that had galled him.

They had stood in the light of protectors ; and now—now what would they say if he were to drown and Purdy escape to tell the story ? On the other hand, if he were to escape and Purdy drown who would ever believe that he had not sacrificed his comrade's life in the struggle to save his own ? He felt that if but one of them were destined to be saved he would prefer that it should be Purdy. So keenly had he felt the boys' ridicule of his effeminacy that he was willing now to give his life to redeem himself—to have them think better of him. For one brief instant he thought of his home and his mother ; then he resolutely put aside the picture that his fancy had summoned before his eyes, and turned his attention to the task which lay before him—that of saving himself and his companion.

The ice was drifting round a broad curve in the river, and it seemed to him that it was growing smaller by the action of the water. Certainly it could not hold together much longer. He knew that the river widened beyond the curve, and as they drifted around he saw before him a dark line stretching from shore to shore.

He knew at once what it meant. The river was still frozen at that point, and when they drifted against the bridge of ice they might, if it proved strong enough, be able to cross upon it to the land.

"We're all right now," he said confidently to his companion; "we'll bump up against that frozen place in a minute or two, and then we can get over on to the ice and put for the shore."

"Do you think it will hold us?" asked Dozen.

"Oh! I guess so," responded Louis briskly, proud to realize that their relative positions had been completely reversed since they started on their coasting expedition. Then it was he who had asked fearfully of Purdy if he thought it was safe. Now it was Purdy who looked up to *him*.

The raft drifted up against the ice and stopped with a sudden shock, that told them they had struck a solid substance.

"Now for it!" exclaimed Christmas; "will you go first or shall I?"

Then, seeing that the other hesitated, he knelt on his sled and pushing with his

right foot glided safely to the frozen bridge that spanned the river. Purdy followed in his wake, and then the two stood up and looked about them. The river seemed to be firmly frozen over, and unless the ice should prove to be rotten near the shore, they could easily reach dry land. They started accordingly, picking their way carefully, and keeping a sharp lookout for air-holes and other treacherous places, but they had not gone many steps when they were brought to a sudden stand-still by a cry which seemed to come from the opposite shore. They stopped and peered into the darkness, and there, far out on the ice, they saw what looked like the figure of a man in a recumbent position. Again they heard the voice, and it said distinctly, "Come and help me over, I'm hurt."

"Come along," said Christmas, "there's some one lying on the ice over there."

"Hadn't we better go and call for help?" asked Purdy; "the river may break up before we get there."

"Yes," retorted the other, "and how long would he be waiting for help? How much help did we get when we hollered

for it coming down the river? You don't want to leave a man to freeze there and die, do you?"

"All right," said Purdy, his courage coming to his aid, "we'll have to go and take him off; but you're the gamest youngster I ever saw."

They made their way cautiously over the ice till they reached the spot, a dozen yards from the farther shore, where the man lay. He was muffled up in a heavy overcoat, and carried a small satchel in his hand.

"Well, you fellows have got pluck to come way across that shaky ice to help a man when he's sprained his ankle," was the stranger's greeting. "Where did you come from, anyway?" he continued.

"Been coasting," said Christmas, as he shoved his sled up alongside the prostrate traveller. Putting the two sleds together they helped him on, and then started to drag him across the ice. They had not gone far before a loud crack reached their ears and brought them to a sudden standstill.

"The river is going to break up," said the man on the sleds; "it won't bear us

all ; you two boys go ahead and leave me here."

"What do you take us for?" growled Purdy. "Come along, Christmas, we'd better run for it ; we can get him to shoal-water, anyway."

So they started again, with the thin ice literally cracking under their feet, and the helpless stranger clinging tightly to the two sleds, which might at any moment sink beneath his weight. Six tall, athletic boys, who came flying down the river-bank, dragging a big bob-sled behind them, saw the three making their way slowly toward the shore, and understood the danger of their position.

"That you, Christmas?" yelled the taller of the six boys.

"Yes, and the ice is cracking awfully. We've got a man here that's hurt and can't walk."

"I'll go out there," said the tall boy to his companions ; and with that he cut the rope attached to the bob-sled and coiled it round his left arm.

"Hold on, Jack, I'm lighter than you, I'll go !" exclaimed Boteler, seizing the rope ; "and, besides, I've got a *right* to go,

to square the Wigwam for the row I got them into." He took the rope and ran toward the three figures, who were now within a hundred feet of the shore. And just then the ice gave way with a great crash, and they were all struggling in water that reached up to Christmas's shoulders and in a current that threatened to sweep them down the stream. Purdy had the presence of mind to spring for the stranger as soon as he felt himself going, and hold him upright in the water until Boteler reached his side. Between them they supported him, and contrived to tie the rope around his body under his arms. Meanwhile Christmas was floundering safely toward the shore, and the five other boys, having aided his progress, waded out, and by means of the rope and the assistance of Purdy and Boteler, succeeded in getting the injured traveller to the bank, where he sank down numb and exhausted.

"Come," said Adsitt, taking him by the arm, "we must get you on the bobsled if you can't walk, for you'll freeze to death sitting here."

The stranger looked up, and Adsitt uttered a cry of surprise.

“Why, Charley Burns, how in the world did you get here?”

It was indeed Big Burns, and as they dragged him slowly up the hill, after almost wringing his arm out of its socket, he told Jack, walking beside him, how he had made up his mind to pay a visit to the old school, and the train having been blocked by the snow, he had attempted to reach the village by a short cut through the fields and across the ice. “But when I got out a little way I slipped and sprained my ankle, and then I was in a fix. I don’t know what I could have done if I hadn’t seen these two fellows just then with their sleds, and mighty plucky boys they are too, for they came way out to me at the risk of their necks and pulled me across. Do they belong to the school? Well, I’m glad they’ve got such fellows here now.”

“I say, fellows,” said Jack Adsitt to his followers, as the procession entered the school grounds, “not a word of all this to-morrow till the Doctor comes in and tells the story himself. He’ll have something to say about it, you can be sure, and some of them will be surprised, I guess.”

CHAPTER XII.

SOME MORE SURPRISES—BIG BURNS REVISITS THE SCHOOL
—THE END OF THE TERM—THE STAR WIGWAM IN-
DORSED AT LAST BY THE DOCTOR.



BULLY! To-morrow we'll be at home again!" was Dixie Ludlow's morning greeting to his room-mate when he awoke on examination day. No doubt the same thought came into many a young head that morning, for an air of unusual

gayety pervaded the hall as the boys ran to and fro from one room to another, shouting, "Merry Christmas!" and disporting themselves like a drove of young goats. Even the prospect of spending the whole afternoon in the school-room as a penance for their midnight orgy of the Monday previous did not check their flow of animal spirits.

There were several surprises in store for them that day, and the first was when Big Burns, with his left ankle tightly bandaged, hobbled into the school-room with a crutch under one arm and his other placed on the Doctor's shoulder. The old boys knew him in a minute and gave him three cheers, a breach of discipline which the Doctor smilingly condoned, while Burns actually blushed at the warmth of his reception. The Doctor seated himself on the platform with his old pupil beside him and tapped the bell to call the school to order. Then he told the story of the arrival of Burns, his adventure on the ice—the train had met with an accident and he was trying to reach the school by a short-cut—and his heroic rescue by two boys who had been

almost lost themselves while drifting down the river on an ice-floe. Then he told how all three had been saved by the timely arrival of the Star Wigwam. "I have to thank, not only the six boys who went so gallantly to the rescue of their comrades, but also the two who, after their perilous voyage, were brave enough to go to the aid of a stranger whom they saw perishing on the ice. Purdy and Christmas, you have in one night fairly won the respect and gratitude of the whole school."

That *was* a surprise! Purdy, one of the worst of the Jackos, and Christmas, the "mammy-coddle," who but a few weeks ago had been frightened out of his senses by the Deacon's phosphorescent ghost! The last boys in the whole school to be suspected of anything like heroism. There was silence in the school-room for a moment, and then Drury gasped out an astonished "Thunder and gums!" which effectually relieved the strain of the situation.

A short recess was then taken, and the boys crowded up to shake hands with Burns, and then to pat Christmas and

Purdy on the back and tell them how much they thought of their pluck. It was a proud moment for Christmas, and it would be a hard task to describe his feelings as his comrades crowded enthusiastically round him, and he realized that he had at last *won* the place in their esteem that he had long coveted. They called him "New Years" still, but he did not mind it. The friendly tone of their voices made it seem almost like a term of endearment.

As for Purdy, he felt as if every pat on the back, every grasp of the hand, was helping to make a man of him and strengthen certain resolutions he had formed the night before as he drifted down-stream on the ice-raft. All the good there was in his nature was rising to the surface. He rose from his seat and walked over to the bench on which M. Valcour was sitting, a pleased spectator of the scene.

"Monsieur Valcour," he said, "I apologized to you the other day because I was compelled to. I would like to apologize to you now on my own account. I was wrong that day in the class-room, and I

admit it in the presence of the Doctor and the whole school."

The impetuous Frenchman leaped from his seat and fairly hugged Purdy, called him "*un brave garçon*" and "*un galant homme*," and declared that he hoped that he would take his place again the next term in his old French class.

That was the third surprise of the day, and before the boys had fully recovered from its effects the principal tapped his bell and began the work of examination.

There was a long recess that day, and Burns paid a visit to his old room in the upper hall, escorted by Tommy Finn, who introduced him to all the new boys, and told him of the many things that had transpired since he left. Big Burns shouted with laughter at Tommy's account of the supper and the appearance of the Deacon in the doorway smeared from head to foot with pie and jam.

"Yes, and we've got to pay for it this afternoon," said Douglas, "for the Doctor gave us ten marks apiece, and as we're going home before Saturday we've got to work them off in the school-room to-day."

“That’s too bad,” said Burns reflectively, “it’s queer the Doctor never mentioned it to me. He must have forgotten it.”

“Oh ! there’s no fear of his forgetting it. He’s got us all down in his notebook,” cried the Deacon.

Then Burns described banquets that had taken place in the upper hall in by-gone days, when “Pop” Scranton and “Commodore” Wallace were big boys, and he was only Charley Burns, one of the small fry ; and as the little boys listened they wondered if it were possible that that big, blond-mustached man could ever have been one of the heedless, happy-go-lucky youngsters of the upper hall. Burns looked into every room in turn, and revived forgotten stories about the boys who had inhabited them in years long gone by. Finn reminded him of the night he had come in to comfort him when he lay weeping with homesickness. He smiled as he recalled it, looking down at the sturdy boy with the bright, laughing face beside him.

“You don’t cry yourself to sleep very often now, Tommy, do you ?” he said.

“No,” replied Finn, “I got over that sort of thing long ago, thanks to you.”

Then the school-bell rang and the boys all trooped off, while Big Burns sat by the stove thinking of the days when he, too, was a school-boy, and perhaps wishing that those old days had not passed away forever.

In his comfortable study, beside a blazing wood fire, sat Dr. Dodd and “Dozen” Purdy. They had been there about half an hour, during which time the principal had spoken kindly and earnestly to the boy about his conduct in the past, his intimacy with Cropsey, and his attitude toward the better element in the school. He had told him that he had made up his mind to dismiss him and Cropsey at the end of the term, but the courage which had been displayed by him, as well as the others concerned, the night before, had induced him to relent in his, Purdy’s case. Cropsey, however, would have to go, as he was an unmitigated evil in the school.

“I cannot forget,” said the Doctor, in conclusion, “that my old pupil, Charles Burns, owes his life to your bravery and

that of your companions. You have a chance to redeem yourself next term, when you will be freed from the influence of Cropsey, with whom you have been associated since you joined the school. I sincerely hope, Purdy, that you will make the best use of the opportunity which you owe to your brave action last night. You may go now."

But Purdy hesitated, as if he had something on his mind.

"Have you anything more to say?" asked the Doctor kindly.

"You never asked me how it was we happened to go out coasting last night. I thought, perhaps, you'd like to know."

That was true. The end of the coasting episode had proved so exciting and dramatic that Dr. Dodd had completely forgotten to make inquiries as to its origin.

"Well, go on," he said.

"It was I that got Christmas to go," said Purdy; "he didn't want to at first, but I called him a mammy-coddle. I had no idea what was going to happen afterward. We slid down on the ice, and the first thing we knew it was loose and sail-

ing down-stream with us on it. I was scared, but that fellow Christmas wasn't—and after my calling him a mammy-coddle, too. If it hadn't been for him I never would have dared to go across the ice after Burns. He's a game boy, and the whole school ought to know it. I thought I'd tell you, that's all ;" and Purdy left the room feeling much easier in his mind than he did when he entered it.

The news of Cropsey's dismissal had already spread among the boys, and many were the expressions of delight at the prospect of being rid of him so soon. But there had been a revulsion of feeling in regard to Purdy—boys are quick to recognize and appreciate courage—and when the Doctor's decision regarding him became known, it elicited many unequivocal marks of satisfaction.

The tidings reached the school-room where the upper hall was doing penance for its midnight supper, and the rejoicings were shared in by M. Valcour, who had been placed in charge of the wrong-doers, and was holding them with a lax rein on account of its being the last day of the term.

"I am glad that Purdy is going to stay," exclaimed "Musseer" heartily; "he made me the *amende honorable* this morning like a gentleman."

"Did you hear about Christmas?" asked Finn; "Purdy says it was he that had the pluck to go across the ice after Burns, and if it hadn't been for him not one of them would have got off alive. Say, Musseer, do you think the Doctor'll let him come back and room in the upper hall again next term? You know he was sent to room with Pine and Adsitt in the Chestnut House after that night you colared me for frightening him with the ghost?"

"I don't know," replied M. Valcour. "Perhaps he will not care to return to a hall where he is liable to meet Professor Skeesics one night and a ghost the next."

"He's crazy to come back," cried Deacon Drury, "and if the Doctor will let him come we'll promise not to play any more tricks on him—that is, not any more than we play on any one else. Anyway, when we want some fun we've always got Smithers to fall back on," he added naively.

After a little discussion they agreed to prefer a unanimous request to the Doctor to have Christmas returned to his old quarters in the upper hall, and at the French teacher's suggestion they determined to ask the co-operation of Pine and Adsitt.

Meanwhile the members of the Star Wigwam were entertaining Big Burns in Adsitt's room in the Chestnut House with a full account of all that they had done since the day when they had organized the league in Burns's old hut under the Devil's Ridge. "We haven't done as much as I hoped we would," said Adsitt, "but the fact is we tackled a pretty big job, and so far we really haven't done much more than make a good beginning. It will take us to the end of the school year, I guess, to do all we set out to. The trouble is, that every time we get everything running smoothly those youngsters in the upper hall break loose with a ghost or something of the sort and demoralize the whole school."

"Let me make a suggestion," said Burns. "Those young boys must have some vent for their animal spirits. Get

them interested in something decent and healthy, and they won't have so much time for general mischief and inventing new tricks to disturb the study hour or scare new boys half to death. In my time we used to have shinny and football matches between the different houses. You ought to revive those next term, or get up a snow-ball fight—anything to keep them from sitting round the stove plotting mischief.”

The last surprise of the day occurred at the close of the evening exercises, when the Doctor announced that his old pupil, Charles Burns, now honoring the school with a brief visit, desired the presence of all the boys at the hotel that evening, where an entertainment had been prepared for them.

A round of applause greeted this announcement, and then the Deacon arose and asked, “Does that invitation extend to the upper hall, too?”

“Certainly,” replied the Doctor, and then, as he saw what Drury was thinking of, he added, “and the upper hall may accept the invitation also, for Burns has specially requested the honor of its com-

pany. Christmas, that includes you, for you may consider yourself once more a member of the upper hall."

And as the boys made merry over the good things which Big Burns provided for them with liberal hand, the Doctor drew Jack Adsitt one side and said :

"I think much better of your Star Wigwam, John, than I did before. You have made a good beginning ; keep up the good work next term."

STRINGTOWN ON THE PIKE

By John Uri Lloyd

FIFTIETH THOUSAND

Cloth, \$1.50 Illustrated

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON says:—"The personages in the book ought to live in the minds of men and women while the language lasts in which their characters are set forth. They are human. They are virile. They are absolutely true to human nature. And they are especially interesting because of their oddity and unusualness—if I may use that term. * * * The best and wisest thing I can say to any reader of this article is, '*read the book.*' "

If you have not read "Stringtown," you will enjoy an introduction to the Judge, the Parson, the Colonel, old Cupe, and other characters in the book, all of which are drawn with such lifelike evidences that "Stringtown on the Pike" has already assumed the position of the most original American novel of recent years. Kentucky is the scene of the story, whose scope is as wide as the country itself.

Dodd, Mead & Company, Publishers

372 Fifth Avenue, New York

The Works of Two Popular Writers

HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

IN KEDAR'S TENTS. 12mo, cloth, . . . \$1.25

THE ISLE OF UNREST. 12mo, cloth, illustrated, . 1.50

The earlier works of Henry Seton Merriman. New and only authorized edition. Revised by the author:

1. SUSPENSE
2. THE PHANTOM FUTURE
3. PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES
4. YOUNG MISTLEY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

LYRICS OF LOWLY LIFE. 16mo, cloth, . . . \$1.25

FOLKS FROM DIXIE. 12mo, cloth. Illustrated by E.

W. Kemble, . . . 1.25

THE UNCALLED. 12mo, cloth, . . . 1.25

LYRICS OF THE HEARTH-SIDE. 16mo, cloth, . 1.25

POEMS OF CABIN AND FIELD. With illustrations.

8vo, cloth, . . . 1.50

THE STRENGTH OF GIDEON. 12mo, cloth, illustrated, 1.25

THE LOVE OF LANDRY. 12mo, cloth, . . 1.25

THE FANATICS. 12mo, cloth, . . . 1.50

Dodd, Mead & Company, Publishers

372 Fifth Avenue, New York

Ruth V. Hackett

